

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Acc. No.

13336

Class.

A. 41.

Book.

by A. Morgan Young

IMPERIAL JAPAN

1926-1938

"A most disturbing and pitiful picture, but it gives a point and a meaning to what we see of Japan abroad. . . . He writes logically, interestingly and with personal knowledge."

CONTEMPORARY REVIEW

JAPAN UNDER TAISHO TENNO

1912-1926

"Nowhere else than in these pages can the reader get so trustworthy, so comprehensive . . . an account of the political, economic and social experiences of Japan during the period immediately before the War, during the War, and since the War."

MANCHESTER GUARDIAN



The Author

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Japan's Religious Background

by

A. MORGAN YOUNG



London

George Allen & Unwin Ltd

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1939

Acc. No.	13336
Class No.	A.41.
Book No.	3

All rights reserved

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
UNWIN BROTHERS LTD., WOKING

Preface

IN the latter part of the nineteenth century Christendom had no competitors, and such other States as existed were regarded as degenerate survivors of obsolete orders. It was not that the story of Queen Victoria and the Bible found unquestioned acceptance. Already "Colenso's words had weight," and there were fierce fights against religious tests. But for many centuries first-class intellects had been tackling the problems of theology and had been laying claim to moral ideas as obligations of Christianity. The world was still very far from perfection, but its sternest critics, though they might dally with Gibbon's fancy of *muezzins* calling the faithful to prayer from minars on the site of St. Paul's, never seriously considered any existing creed as superior to Christianity or likely to replace it or even win recognition as a worthy equal.

Early in the twentieth century, however, Russophobia in England grew to such a pitch that it was thought wise to make an alliance with Japan which should encourage Japan to challenge Russia for the hegemony of North-eastern Asia. British money and armaments enabled Japan to win the victory, though she could hardly have done so without the help of the abortive revolution which made it desirable for the Russian Government to bring the Far Eastern adventure to an end on terms more ominous than Tsarism had ever been.

Japan had owed her rise to the position of Ally of the greatest Power in the world to her sedulous copying of the unchristian aspects of Christendom, along with the adoption

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

of a mythical loyalty to her Imperial Family such as had never really existed except in the sense of the Emperor being the Grand Mascot of the tribe; but so impressed were the Japanese by the predominance of Christianity in a world where religions had struggled for political leadership that even for some years after the victory over Russia, leading Japanese statesmen debated seriously whether it would not be advisable to make Christianity a State religion, because lacking this Japan lacked something in international prestige and felt that she was still looked down upon by the Christian nations.

Perhaps the Great War went far to dispel this illusion. Certainly since that disaster much less has been heard of the prestige of Christianity and much more about the divinity of the Japanese Imperial House. But there is a more remarkable phenomenon than this: during the period when Japan strove for recognition on equal terms by the Christian Powers, she conformed approximately in her dealings with them to the standard of truth which they generally observed, at least when there was any risk of a departure therefrom being discovered. Since the realisation, at the end of 1931, however, that no untoward results followed such a discovery, there has been a return to the indifference to truth upon which Townsend Harris, the first American Minister, made caustic comment. It is true that a similar phenomenon has manifested itself still more recently in Europe, and there too as an accompaniment of the rejection of standards declared to be outworn—but the subject of telling the truth is a very large one, of which no general discussion can be undertaken here.

Japan's recent fluctuations in international truthfulness are trifling matters compared with her towering mendacities concerning the loyalty upon which she builds her national unity; and these, while used for the deception of foreigners, are much more important in domestic politics. Not only in

PREFACE

Imperial Rescripts do they make the Emperor the First Prevaricator in the Land, but they make anthropology, historical research, and the humanities extremely dangerous subjects for Japanese to study. National pretences also drive Japan forward on a path which must ultimately lead to disaster. For the time being, evil flourishes, but such weapons turn at last upon those who use them. To wait for that consummation, however, is not sufficient. To leave evil unchecked and unexposed is to spread it and prolong it.

A. M. Y.

OXFORD

January 1939

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
I LIGHT FROM THE WEST	13
II WRITING FIRST USED TO ESTABLISH FALSEHOOD	35
III THE JAPANESE AS HEAD-HUNTERS	63
IV "SUBJECTS EVER UNITED IN LOYALTY"	88
V RELIGIOUS GROWTH UNDER A DIVINE MONARCH	103
VI THE NEW SHINTO	132
VII POPULAR VARIETIES OF SHINTO	180
VIII ORTHODOXY AND AUTHORITY	195
IX THE MAKING OF A BOOK	211
INDEX	223



CHAPTER I

LIGHT FROM THE WEST

●

IN assessing the progress which Japan has made since 1859, when she first entered into treaty relations with the Western Powers, observers generally overlook the part played by religion, for while religion has been all-important in the development of Western civilisation, the acceptance of that fact causes us to overlook its importance in estimating the qualities of a civilisation which we carelessly regard as an imitation of our own, adorned with a few vestigial ornaments of a different dispensation. Diverse in language and doctrine, Christendom has been one in culture and civilisation, and at the beginning of its twentieth century, though its religious dogmas were freely challenged, its political supremacy appeared impregnable. Despising meekness, it inherited the earth, and worshipping wealth, it claimed the kingdom of heaven. The early years of the twentieth century, however, witnessed a new portent: without even paying lip-service to Christianity, a pagan kingdom won a place among the greatest States of the world; and, while Christendom had often claimed that its success was due to the moral superiority of its religious doctrine, Japan won her advancement by means of a religion destitute of moral content. An achievement so contrary to all that we had regarded as a historic necessity merits such examination as may discover for us its

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

logical reasons, and the study of what seems anomalous may reveal principles which are universal.

Concerning Japanese origins, there is abundant speculation but little positive knowledge. It is easy on the most casual survey to decide that there are several racial types; but it is difficult even by careful examination to determine the proportions of the mixture. The Mongolian contribution is unmistakable; but aboriginal, Malay, and other blends are matters of guess-work, and still more so are the dominant or recessive characters of such blends. Moreover, it may well be that each contribution to what we call the Japanese race was itself a racial mixture. Cultural inheritances are more easily traced and their significance is more readily assessed; but we cannot tell how these may be modified by contact or by racial predisposition.

Some archæologists have supposed that there were, before the Ainu, a race of cave-dwellers or of people living in holes in the ground; but when Japanese history begins, the Ainu were already a defeated race, retreating gradually to the northern regions where the Japanese were disinclined to follow them. No doubt there was some absorption of Ainu elements, but whether this was sufficient to impart any permanent characteristics it is impossible to find any general agreement.* There is also a lack of agreement by several centuries as to when the Japanese emerged from the Stone Age, and perhaps the emergence was so gradual that neolithic conditions remained in some parts of the country long after others were familiar with the use of iron.

In savage illiterate times it was natural enough to ascribe deity to a ruler, and barbarous tribes have so little imagination

* Dr. N. G. Munro, pre-eminent in archæological field-work in Japan, believes that the Ainu contribution was large and valuable, but others, including most Japanese investigators, are not disposed to agree with him.

LIGHT FROM THE WEST

of what is involved in a supernatural concept that with them the difference between a man and a god is very small; but as man progresses in knowledge he learns the limits of his powers, and divine pretensions in monarchs become the clumsy frauds of charlatans. While, therefore, Japanese pretensions that their Emperor is divine invite the censures of the honest, its origins attract the attention of students. Says Putnam Weale:*

For political reasons the Japanese trace their Emperors from a sun-goddess who is supposed to have come from Korea in the seventh century B.C. There is a great deal more in myths than is generally supposed, and there is no reason to doubt that the earliest connection between the Asiatic Mainland and Southern Japan was expressed in the terms of an armed invasion led by a queen. In any case it is generally accepted that the Japanese are partly descended from a double stream of immigrants who came from the mainland by way of Korea, one stream being Manchu-Korean and the other Mongol; but Baelz, one of the most distinguished investigators of Japanese origins, finds from the recording of many cephalic indices and from other biometrical data that the strongest strain in the people is undoubtedly Malay.

If you strip off the outer Chinese clothing of both men and women (the kimono is a direct importation from China made during the Tang dynasty) you make a remarkable discovery. The men wear a loincloth peculiar to all the water-peoples of the island-groups along the shores of Southern Asia; whilst the women have on what is nothing more or less than the Malay *sarong*, or skirt, and a little sleeveless jacket. Garbed like this, and placed on the curved Malay fishing-boats still in use, you see the original invaders as they floated up from their southern islands on the *kuroshiwo*, or black current, which washes their shores. In their houses, raised two feet above the ground, you may trace the vestigial remains of the water-house

* *The Truth about China and Japan*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1921, pp. 15-16.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

built on piles; and, although the Japanese share with the Koreans the habit of removing their shoes indoors and sitting on matted floors, their peculiar wooden clogs, with the separated big toe, are plainly the invention of a bare-footed people treading the forest trails and needing at a moment's notice to be able to free their feet for tree-climbing.

It is necessary to dwell on these details in order to fix well the differences between the Chinese and the Japanese. The Chinese almost from the dawn of history are a race of peaceful cultivators, walling themselves in for defence; the Japanese are a water-people who became a forest-folk, and who hunt and fish and only learn agriculture reluctantly. At the beginning of the Christian era, thinly scattered in the valleys and along the coasts of their own islands, they had not yet driven out the aborigines we know as the Ainus, and warfare against them was constant and intense. Being rude and unlettered, there are few traces of their early history.

A Chinese record of the first century of our era is the first positive knowledge that we have of the Japanese, who at that time sent an envoy to the court of the greatest and most civilised Empire then existing, not excepting that of Rome. The scribe records that some Chinese who paid a return visit remarked on the resemblance of Japanese customs to those of the southern Chinese, and said that there were a hundred kingdoms in the land. He also records a very general custom of tattooing, with patterns according to rank, and mentions that the whale was tattooed on their bodies. Mr. Dudley Buxton* makes the general belief in a southern origin explain the "Malay" hypothesis as well as the Chinese observation of Southern manners. Differing from Baelz, he thinks that the shape of the Japanese head is inconsistent with the idea of a large Malay admixture. He also objects to the idea of there being a Nesiot (Indonesian) origin, also on the

* *The Peoples of Asia*, by L. H. Dudley Buxton. Kegan Paul & Co., 1925.

cranial argument, though the Nesian contribution might account for a smaller stature than the other elements would lead one to expect. Buxton prefers the conjecture that the southern element in the Japanese is "Proto-Malayan" from South China. This, however, seems to create a difficulty rather than solve one, for it puts the migration of the Southern element back to a time too remote for their manners to have been recognised when the Chinese envoys visited Japan. Still more positively it leaves unexplained the resemblance between the Japanese and the Malay house, which are much closer than could be expected to result from a remote common ancestry in Southern China. Morse, in *Japanese Homes and their Surroundings*,* finds domestic architecture very characteristic of the Japanese style not only in the Malay Peninsula but in Annam.

The conjecture has been made that the Japanese show Malay traits in their extreme emotionalism. One hesitates to ascribe mental characteristics to racial inheritance, for, while scientific investigators should not overlook what may be an extremely important biological fact, no investigation of the connection between physical and mental characters has, in fact, been carried out, but, on the other hand, haphazard ascriptions have been made, sometimes by men whose scientific knowledge should have prevented them from doing so, and, being inspired by prejudice, such guesses have often done a grave injustice to their victims. The cultivation of a dignified calm and the avoidance of any exhibition of anger which form part of the social education of all Japanese, have been ascribed (sometimes by Japanese themselves) to a consciousness of liability to that ungovernable rage which causes the Malay to run amok. It is, indeed, highly to their

* Published in 1888 by Sampson Low & Co., but unfortunately out of print for many years.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

credit if they have thus conquered an inborn trait. But to this day a Japanese, especially of the lower classes, is apt, after brooding over a grievance, to embark on a family murder.

So far as archæological research has been able to discover, the Japanese, from whatever ethnic sources they were derived, and at whatever date they arrived in the country, were rude Stone-Age people. Such remains as shell mounds tell us little beyond the fact that there is little to tell. Legends among an illiterate people change rapidly, and, when we first find them in Japan, they have been hopelessly sophisticated for political purposes. Customs among primitives are always of uncertain age. They may be of immense antiquity, but if only two generations old they are followed as slavishly. Until we come to a literate age we are making more or less intelligent deductions from scanty remains such as uncivilised men left everywhere; and as soon as we come to records we find that they were written rather for the deception of the reader than for his instruction.

Even the earliest Chinese records we are advised by a high authority* to "read with respectful incredulity." The witness may be imperfect, but at the same time may be sufficiently reliable to provide a check on evidence still more faulty. At the outset we find the Chinese referring to the Japanese as *Wa*, the ideogram used meaning a dwarf, and claiming suzerainty over them. And we are reminded straightway of the Empress Dowager whose follies brought such woe to China, and who in 1894 ordered her armies to "defeat the ugly dwarfs," not knowing that the Japanese no longer held the Chinese in reverence as their teachers. Sansom says:

When the first Ts'in Emperor, Shih Hwang-ti, had suppressed his rivals, he travelled in these and neighbouring regions (South

* Sir George Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*. The Cresset Press, 1932.

LIGHT FROM THE WEST

Manchuria and North Korea), and, so the legend has it, he sent from the Shantung coast to an island in the east a certain Taoist sage named Su Fu, with three thousand men and women, artisans of all trades, and a cargo of seeds. Not much faith is to be put in this tale, but it shows at least a long tradition of contact between China and Japan. It is remarkable too that in the earliest Japanese writings the word for a weaver is written with the character for Ts'in. This again may simply mean that the character was chosen with the tradition in mind. It does not confirm the tradition but it does show that it was commonly accepted.

In its more romantic form the legend has it that the Emperor sent five hundred youths and five hundred maidens to populate the islands in the east. But that need not discredit the other story of the cultural mission. Indeed, it is not a very extravagant hypothesis that the coming of Su Fu was the beginning of Japanese history. Hwang-ti was a very remarkable man. He was the first to bring China under the dominion of a single ruler. He is execrated by the Chinese historians as the enemy of learning, for he ordered the burning of the books and the extermination of the scribes, which was, no doubt, a barbarous thing to do; but we have masterful men in our own day who would like to make a fresh start with their own pronunciamientos as sufficient for our guidance. Hwang-ti was also responsible for the conception of the idea and the beginning of the construction of the Great Wall, behind whose barrier China enjoyed centuries of peace from incursion of the wild tribes. The expedition to Japan was just such an idea as might occur to him. We can only wish that there was some record, even like these few lines, of another cultural invasion of Japan which appears to have taken place from Korea and to have brought to the islands the art of working in iron.

At the time of the Ts'in dynasty, Buddhism had not yet

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

spread its civilising light over China; and though the Chinese had sought wisdom diligently, and the sayings of Confucius were already a guide to a great nation, Hwang-ti would not have wished to give to Japan that literature which he considered that his own people would be better without; and if he really sent a mission to Japan, it could have taken with it nothing of that rich culture in which art, religion, and civilisation became almost synonymous terms, and the remains of which represent all that is of value in Japan to-day. Even if the ideogram for a weaver may be taken as a faint echo of Su Fu's influence, it would only show how small were the beginnings of the conversion of the rude unlettered Japanese into a literate people. Nevertheless, if the mission taught them to cultivate rice, to weave cloth, to work in metals, and to make pottery, its contribution to the civilisation of the country was a great one; and somehow these things were learnt before Japan set herself so diligently to imitate a later Chinese culture as to be at one time in danger of losing her identity.

The most imperfect of contemporary records is far superior to the most elaborate of oral traditions, and many centuries after the Japanese would have us believe that Japan was an empire united under a single monarch, the Chinese records tell us that it was a land of many kingdoms. From this more reliable source we learn of a Queen Pimiku in Japan, in A.D. 247, who seems to have been a person of no small importance, for she was much at war, and, when she died, was buried with a thousand of her followers. This touches on an interesting problem. A custom so widely spread throughout the world as that of "following one's lord in death," may well have been known in Japan. It was not long after this grand funeral of Queen Pimiku that the Emperor Suinin (A.D. 249-280, according to the corrected date, though

“officially” 29 B.C. to A.D. 70) abolished the custom. Archæologists tell us of shell-mounds and similar ancient accumulations where the larger human bones have been found broken, as though for the sake of the marrow, thus indicating an early cannibalism; but they are rather vague concerning the burial of living retainers in more recent sepulchres. According to the story told of Suinin, when his brother died the doomed retainers were, apparently, only half buried, and naturally bewailed their sad fate. Their cries distressed the Emperor greatly, but he went through with it: he did not think of rescuing them. Among primitive people this would be quite natural: Suinin had respect to the customs, and it was a favourite wrestler, Nomi-no-sukune, from Idzumo, who suggested, as a means of both keeping the custom and abolishing it, that clay dolls be buried instead of living people. These clay images, both of men and horses, are found in abundance. Curiously enough, the Chinese have a story almost identical with the Japanese, and considerably older; this also tells of the Emperor’s distress at the cruelty of the rite, and how a favourite recommended the substitution of clay images for the living victims. As the Japanese frequently incorporated picturesque scraps of Chinese history into their own scanty records, in order to give them more substance, it is at least possible that they are here laying claim to a barbarism that they never practised in order to explain a custom that has no warrant.

On the other hand, they may have copied both the barbarism and its abolition. We find a couple of centuries later Yuriaku, the Japanese Elagabalus, clearing his way to the throne by burying a brother alive. At least, he “dug a pit and buried him as he stood, so that by the time he had been buried up to the loins, both his eyes burst out, and he died.”*

* *Kojiki*, trans. Chamberlain, pp. 370–371. Kobe: J. L. Thompson & Co.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

It looks rather like a traditional method of disposal. "Junshi," in the form of suicide in order to follow one's lord to the nether springs, undoubtedly existed. Indeed, we have a very recent example in the suicide of General Nogi, after the death of the Emperor Meiji, in 1912. When the Japanese Napoleon, Hideyoshi, died in 1598, the ladies of his harem made a great outcry, all declaring that they would follow him into the shades; but, as a cynical chronicler of the time says, after all they didn't: there was no need, for, according to the Buddhists, this world is a vale of tears in which to live is to die.* One explanation of the Eta caste's existence is that they are descendants of retainers who escaped from immolation and thereby became a sort of outcast, being ceremonially dead: but this is merely a fanciful invention, probably not even Japanese.

As already mentioned, the earliest definite knowledge we have of a connection between Japan and China is in the first century of our era, when a Japanese envoy was sent. Naturally there must have been much intercourse before relations got to the length of sending an emissary to the Chinese Court, and, since any advances beyond the neolithic culture that Japan had made were due to Chinese tuition, we must presume a certain amount of Sinification at this early date, though, in all probability, it was as yet confined to agriculture and handicraft, and had not advanced to art and letters.

China had at that time made considerable progress in philosophy; the Confucian and Taoist systems were already of respectable antiquity, Indian thought had coloured Chinese mentality, and there were even traces of Greek ideas. Underlying the Chinese culture, however, was the simple nature-worship which until yesterday found its most magnificent expression in the ceremonies performed by the Emperor at

* Sadler, *The Maker of Modern Japan*. George Allen & Unwin, 1937.

the Temple of Heaven and the Altar of Heaven. A singularly impersonal "Heaven" was and is the general standard of reference for all human worth; great men, equally with the forces of nature, were deified, and "the powers which control nature are also identified with ancient heroes, but they are mostly heroes of the type of St. George and the dragon, of whom history has little to say, and Chinese respect for the public service and official rank takes the queer form of regarding these spirits as celestial functionaries."* Deification and euhemerism play into each others' hands for the multiplication of deities, and while Confucianism is admirably adapted to the most logical and sceptical minds, "Taoism rejected no godlings and no legends, however grotesque," and "the Taoists, whenever they thought a new deity needful or ornamental, simply invented him."†

What has now become a genius for eclecticism was, at the dawn of Japanese civilisation, an omnivorous appetite for knowledge, and to say less than we have said regarding the Chinese origins of Japanese religious ideas is impossible. Religious ideas and the principle of their manufacture alike found a fertile soil, and the more the student of Japan becomes acquainted with things Chinese, the more impressed is he with the immensity of the debt Japan owes to China. But just as one finds an occasional custom of other than Chinese origin, so too in religious ideas there is a fragmentary residue of primitive animism and of Polynesian or Malayan sea mythology. The appropriation of Chinese myths whenever it was found convenient, the facile deification of heroes, the gradual personification of animistic fancies, and the ranking as deities of things evil and contemptible equally with those beneficent or sublime, filled the Japanese Pantheon with a miscellaneous assortment of divinities among which aspiring

* Sir Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, iii, p. 225. † *Ibid.*, pp. 227-228.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

souls found little direction though the base found sanctions for whatever they would.

It took about two centuries for Buddhism to make its way over the vast extent of China. Introduced in the middle of the first century, it gained general acceptance by the latter part of the third century. In due course it spread to Korea, and was adopted in the southern principality of Paikche in the year 384. With Paikche Japan had very close relations, and there was a sort of Japanese colony wedged between the principality and its rival Silla. Silla had not yet seen the light of Buddhism, but was far more warlike than Paikche, whose king, Syong Myong, sent many urgent messages seeking help against the assaults of his enemies. He also urged the acceptance of Buddhism, and in the year 552 he sent an image of Buddha, books, and various ecclesiastical accessories, with a memorial to the Emperor Kimmei, saying: "This is the most excellent among all doctrines, but it is hard to explain and hard to understand. Even the Duke of Chou and Confucius had not attained to a knowledge of it. It can give merit and reward without measure and without bounds, and so lead to a grasp of the highest wisdom. Imagine a man possessing treasures to his heart's content and able to satisfy all his wishes. So it is with this wonderful doctrine. Every prayer is fulfilled and naught is wanting. Moreover, it has spread from distant India to the three Han (Korea), where all receive it with reverence. Your servant therefore has humbly dispatched his retainer to transmit it to the Imperial Court and to spread it throughout the home provinces, in order to fulfil the words of the Buddha *My Law shall spread to the East.*"*

* The translation given by Sir Charles Eliot (*Japanese Buddhism*, p. 198), who in the main follows Aston, is quoted here. It varies considerably, though perhaps not much in total meaning, from that of Dr. Anesaki, in his *History of Japanese Religion*, p. 53.

LIGHT FROM THE WEST

In those days, in spite of ideas being enlarged by a fairly extensive Sinification, the monstrous fable of the divinity of the Japanese Imperial House was only in its infancy. Deification was little more than the respect due to the dead by the living, and the deification of the Emperor was chiefly a posthumous thing and different only in degree from that of any of his subjects. Religion was still a strictly utilitarian performance of superstitious rites. The enormous prestige of China prescribed the acceptance of a gift so highly recommended. On the other hand, it did not seem to have been of any great service to Paikche, which, in spite of the acceptance of the religion, was in constant danger from the warlike qualities of the unconverted Silla. It was clear, therefore, that it had no military value. The Emperor Kimmei was eager for the adoption of this new religion, but his divinity, even in the rudimentary stage in which it then existed, had been sufficient to rob him of effective temporal power, for which there was a struggle between the Nakatomi family, the hereditary priests of the tribe, the Mononobe, who exercised surveillance over military affairs, and the Soga, who supervised the administration. It is significant of the advance from the tribal state which Japan had already made that this division of function should have thus been shared out among leading families, and that priests and army should combine to maintain their prestige against the encroaching of the civil administration.* The priests and the military prevailed. There were Japan's own gods, they argued, who might be offended. At the same time it was evident that the doctrine offered was something too far transcending their tribal rites to be summarily rejected. The expedient was taken, therefore,

* The triumph of the army and the gods over the democratic forces in 1931 was, allowing for differences in time and circumstance, not at all dissimilar.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

of bidding the head of the Soga, who advocated adoption, try the new religion himself experimentally.

This demonstration by the Nakatomi was probably the first manifestation of Japanese patriotism, which has in these latter days become a menace to Asiatic civilisation. But Soga had already anticipated the great Fujiwara family by endeavouring to make the Imperial Family a mere cadet branch of his own, from whom the Soga should nominate emperors and through whom, as dependent relatives, he should rule the Palace. There were forces, however, which he could not rule, and a severe epidemic which followed the setting up of the image of Buddha in his house was so powerful an argument that the Emperor came to the conclusion that the Nakatomi were right, after all, and that the gods of the land were jealous gods, so the new cult was abandoned, and the Buddha was cast into the Naniwa Canal. Perhaps Soga himself was also convinced, for we read that when envoys came again from the King of Paikche, begging once more for help against his enemies, Soga advised him, as a sure prescription for prosperity, to worship the Founder of the Land, Onamochi.* If the king took this advice, he failed to profit by it, for Silla presently conquered Paikche, and the gods of Japan did nothing to preserve the Japanese colony of Mimana, which was lost in the downfall of Paikche.

Bidatsu succeeded Kimmei, and Soga-no-Umako succeeded Soga Iname. Bidatsu cared nothing for Buddhism, but Umako was eager to establish it. Perhaps he considered that the victorious Silla's conversion proved it to be a winning horse after all, for he imported images and books from Silla, and set up a number of temples. But another pestilence

* Onamochi appears later as an Idzumo deity, and has played his part in this twentieth century in helping to establish Japan's claims to Korea. See p. 50.

broke out, and Bidatsu allowed Mononobe to destroy the temples, which were evidently displeasing to the gods. So far from abating, the pestilence grew in virulence, so Bidatsu, who believed in fleeing from the divine wrath by whatever deity manifested, told Umako to build the temples again. Yomei, the next Emperor, reigned for only two years and died of the pestilence, but, so far from regarding it as a visitation of the angry gods, he uttered a confession of faith as he lay dying, and was thus the first Emperor to be a Buddhist.

The Mononobe family, whose influence was already declining, disappeared in a struggle over the nomination for the Throne. Some widow or male relative of the Imperial House had to occupy the Throne, but which one was often a matter for intrigue between powerful nobles.* In this case Mononobe-no-Moriya and Soga-no-Umako presented rival candidates, who were brothers. Mononobe's object was to prevent the introduction of Buddhism, but he fell in battle against the Soga, whose nominee was elevated to the Throne with the name of Sujun. If the poor wight thought he was fortunate he was quickly undeceived, for Soga, finding him insufficiently pliable, had him assassinated, and buried him with indecent haste and without the proper rites.

This drastic step does not appear to have weakened the Soga influence, but rather to have strengthened it. Soga-no-Umako had on his side Umayado (better known as the Crown Prince Shotoku), who was a great scholar and a fervent Buddhist; and to celebrate the victory over Mononobe-no-Moriya each of them built a magnificent temple, Umako's being known as Hokeji, and Shotoku's as Shitennoji. These are supposed to have been the first temples really worthy of

* The Meiji Tenno (1868-1912) had one weakly son whom he was anxious to nominate as heir; there was a powerful party with a brighter nominee, but a German physician's support enabled Meiji to get his way.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

the name in Japan. Shotoku appears to have wielded ample powers, but the Soga placed his own niece, Suiko, a daughter of Kimmei and widow of Bidatsu, on the throne (A.D. 592-628) with Shotoku as heir. In this appointment it is possible that we see a Chinese custom carried, logically, further than the Chinese carried it. It was usual for the Empress-Dowager in China to be all-powerful—a custom which prevailed disastrously down to the end of the Empire,* and perhaps the frequency with which at the period under discussion Emperors' widows became Empress is due to an early imitation of Chinese ways, though the construction of the Palace in slavish imitation of the Chinese model did not come till the Nara period, A.D. 708. Empresses flourished in this era, but there appears to have been a disinclination in Japan to accept female sovereigns. After a brief period of honour the position of Japanese women deteriorated and has never recovered, the existing Imperial Household Law not permitting of there being an Empress in her own right.

A very practical consideration on the part of Soga-no-Umako in choosing his niece as Empress was his knowledge of the conspicuous ability of Shotoku, who, had he occupied the throne, might not have continued amenable to his powerful Minister, which would have necessitated the murder of another Emperor, and even the masterful Soga might not have been able to continue such a policy as that. He was setting the pattern for the whole history of his country, and an essential ingredient was the tempering of tyranny with caution. Few indeed of Japan's Emperors have enjoyed power, though from the earliest times of which there are imperial proclamations extant, real or spurious, these proclamations have claimed divinity. It has always been found expedient

* This is explained in detail by Sir Reginald Johnstone in *Twilight in the Imperial City*.

LIGHT FROM THE WEST

to keep up the pretence of an unbroken sacred line, thereby enabling whatever family held the person of the Emperor to maintain its grip, and rivals to make compromises or compel the ruling family to buy their allegiance. Even so, the greater part of Japan's history is a chronicle of murderous civil wars.

There is a general agreement that Shotoku was a great scholar. Japan had by this time many Korean and Chinese immigrants, some adventurers, some political refugees from continental disturbances, and a few scholars anxious to spread the light of Buddhism. Their numbers and their influence had been increasing for a very long time, but apparently they never formed a party or maintained any connection with the land of their origin. In most cases, no doubt, their identity was lost by the adoption of Japanese names, but at a later date than this it is recorded that a very large proportion of Japanese noble houses were descended from Korean or Chinese immigrants. This was only natural, as they must have brought with them arts and abilities unknown to the natives, and their children would tend to take the lead among the less cultured populace of pure Japanese.

But we may suppose that the greater number of the immigrants were ordinary men who merely taught by virtue of being representatives of a higher culture, and that even the scholarly minority would by no means all be interested in playing the pedagogue to the people among whom they had settled. Hence the immigrants were assimilated as fast as the culture they brought with them, though there is some trace of their descendants being sufficiently distinguishable to form a class coming in social rank after the imperial clan and the descendants of conquered chiefs and imperial bastards who claimed kinship with the gods of a less exalted kind than that of the Emperors.*

* Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, p. 72.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Shotoku's policy was to send monks and students to China to learn rather than to invite scholars to come from China to teach. He must have gained his own learning from foreign scholars, but he also had the perspicacity to understand that too great an influx would endanger the supremacy of the Japanese in their own land, as culture conquers more surely than the sword. Better than any man of his day he understood how vastly superior the Chinese was to the Japanese civilisation, but while he cultivated the spiritual humility proper to a good Buddhist, he tried to establish a diplomatic equality of status with the Emperor of China. In a letter addressed to the Emperor of China, Shotoku opens with the words, "The Ruler of the Land of Sunrise to the Ruler of the Land of Sunset." The Chinese record says that the Japanese envoy was required to explain this presumption. The ancestors of the men who to-day declare suavely that the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Chinese is merely a token of friendship were, no doubt, equal to the occasion, but the Emperor began his reply, "The Emperor speaks to the Prince of Yamato." Shotoku returned to the charge with, "The Heavenly Ruler of the East speaks to the Emperor of the West."

Dr. Anesaki is of opinion that this was the first occasion on which "Tenno" (Heavenly Ruler) was used for the Emperor of Japan. (It is still the usual appellation.) And he goes on, "In this way diplomatic communication with China was opened by insisting on terms of equality, a manifestation of the prince's conviction of the equality of nations in the light of Buddhist faith."* The Buddhist faith has nothing to say on the equality of nations, and it seems more to the point that there should be so early an assertion

* *History of Japanese Religion*, by Anesaki Masaharu, D.Lit., LL.D. Kegan Paul, 1930, p. 59.

LIGHT FROM THE WEST

of the spurious divinity of the Chiefs of Yamato. This dispatch of an envoy by Shotoku was in the year 607. We may note that the Emperor Wu, in A.D. 420, made the Yamato Chief a Chinese General.

In the fourteenth year of the Emperor Enkyo, he sent a message to the Emperor of the So Dynasty of China, and requested him to recognise the self-assumed Chinese title of the "Governor-General of Japan and all the Provinces of Korea." The gap that then yawned between the civilisation of China and Japan is readily imaginable from the attitude of humiliation adopted by the proud Emperor, who deemed it a special privilege to become a subordinate of the Chinese Court and receive a title from it.*

An important point in connection with the introduction of Buddhism into Japan has been generally overlooked, and the omission to take it into account has led to much confusion of thought. The primitive race who established themselves in Yamato and learned the arts of civilisation from their great neighbour had but the faintest conception of any spiritual powers. "The difficulty," says Sir Charles Eliot,† "of finding a satisfactory equivalent in Chinese for the word God is well known, and has caused much discussion among missionaries." The difficulty is certainly not less in Japanese. There is no word but *kami*, and the poorest householder who keeps a *kamidana* ("god shelf") regards his own ancestors as *kami*. The gods of Japanese folklore, as mixed in origin as the Japanese themselves, were little more than mortals: like the figures in the cinematograph, they might for a moment in a "close-up" assume gigantic size and immediately sink to human proportions. They even died and were buried.

* Takekoshi Yosaburo, *The Economic Aspects of the History of the Civilisation of Japan*, i, p. 5. George Allen & Unwin, 1930.

† *Hinduism and Buddhism*, iii, p. 224.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Some had a sort of immortality, especially those more directly connected with the reigning house, and the food offerings once rendered to them in the simplest sort of enclosure made with four sticks and a piece of string became announcements with elaborate ceremonial at timber shrines as the worshippers progressed in mental growth and material wealth.

But the progress made, especially in the intellectual field, was still very limited when the flood of Buddhist learning found its way to Japan. The stream was attenuated rather than enlarged by its passage through China. The Chinese contributions to philosophy brought no addition to the conceptions of the Indian makers of Buddhism. Much of the sacerdotal literature was merely transliterated from Sanskrit into the Chinese ideographs and remained for ever meaningless. Each Chinese temple had its Tripitaka, but the Japanese have not shown any great zeal in translation.

The complicated metaphysics of Buddhism have awakened little interest in the Japanese nation. Another fact, curious but true, is that these people have never been at the trouble to translate the Buddhist canon into their own language. The priests use a Chinese version, the laity no version at all nowadays, though—to judge from allusions scattered up and down Japanese literature—they would seem to have been more given to searching the scriptures a few hundred years ago.*

Perhaps this attenuation of a body of thought that includes some of the sublimest attainments of the human intellect saved the Japanese folklore from the oblivion to which it seemed destined when Shotoku made Buddhism the State religion; but, handicapped though Buddhism was by the

* Chamberlain, *Things Japanese*, p. 79.

media which it passed through, it was such a revelation to the Japanese that it is easy to understand the enthusiasm with which, once some dim comprehension of it was implanted in the native mind, it was received. China too was going through the intellectual renaissance of the T'ang period, and the artistic results supplied Japan with that medium of æsthetic expression in which she has ever since excelled. This latent genius, now for the first time realised, inspired a splendid enthusiasm for beauty which is Japan's greatest contribution to the world's culture.

The necessity of using the Japanese vocabulary for ideas which it had never before expressed had momentous results, the chief of which was that it raised the dead Yamato chieftains from the status of a mere vague presence or of a ghost that it was expedient to pacify with make-believe offerings of food and drink, to that of God, the Creator of the Universe, in whom man lives and moves and has his being. This, we may suppose, only came gradually. At first the seeker after enlightenment was conscious only that he was trying to express something grander than had ever been expressed before, and with the aid of treatise and commentary he came, step by step, to an apprehension of what that Something was. And this too his dead chieftain was. The Emperors themselves, intelligent, aspiring and pious Buddhists as several of them were, did not disguise their consciousness of their own intimations of mortality. In prayer they humbled themselves before the Bodhisat, as human beings who recognised their own smallness and their all but infinite distance from perfection; but as Emperors they proclaimed in their pronouncements a divinity which was expanding from the trivial fancies of the neolithic mind towards the attempts of the Indian intellect to comprehend the idea of the Absolute. The mind of the Stone Age sees in its tribal strong man the

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

All Highest* and when the primitive has become sophisticated he promotes the Highest to previously unimagined honour. The Japanese mind has so accustomed itself to using words with an extended ambiguity of meaning that it never experiences any difficulty in believing incompatible things, and solemnly affirms that a feeble creature with adenoids and tortoiseshell spectacles is God. An example of their customary abuse of words is given by Sir Charles Eliot:

In Buddhist families the mortuary tablets are placed before the household shrine which occupies a shelf in one of the inner apartments and the dead are commonly spoken of as Buddhas (*hotoke-sama*). This bold language is, so far as I know, peculiar to Japan and is an imitation of Shinto. The Shinto dead become (it is not explained how) Kami or superhuman beings, for the translation "gods" is an exaggeration; it could hardly be allowed that the Buddhistic dead had an inferior status and they were therefore termed Buddhas, Buddha and Kami being, according to popular ideas, much the same.†

This illustrates the working of the process. The words expressing the primitive tribal ideas of the Stone Age are stretched to include the Infinite, and foreign words have to be used with the same grotesque inappropriateness; so, as comprehension expands, mental integrity vanishes.

* Japanese etymologists connect *kami* = a god with *kami* = above, and *kami* = the hair of the head: but Japanese etymology is a dangerous subject. If they were once connected, *kami* the god has broken away from his early associates and become something much more comprehensive.

† *Japanese Buddhism*, p. 185.

CHAPTER II

WRITING FIRST USED TO ESTABLISH FALSEHOOD



NO record exists of the first experiments in the writing of the Japanese language. Shotoku is said to have been a voluminous writer, and fragments exist which are believed to be his own handwriting, and which were certainly written long ago by a Chinese scholar. The writing of Chinese had for long been a polite accomplishment, and it would seem as though, from the beginning, writing was used in Japan more for establishing lies than for recording the truth. Nearly a hundred and fifty years before Shotoku, the Emperor Ingyo (he who sought the Emperor of China's sanction to his territorial titles) gave orders that the family registers of noble families be rectified, as they had become exceedingly corrupt, and large numbers claimed divine descent who obviously were not entitled to do so.* Those who maintained such claims were invited to prove them by means of the ordeal of boiling water. None were so credulous as to believe that no harm would come to them if their claims were genuine, but those who were prepared to run some risk for the honour

* There is nothing peculiarly Japanese in this. King Edward the Seventh, without the aid of the hot-water cure, considerably reduced the number of baronets in his dominions.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

of their ancestors, bound bark tightly round their paws before dipping them; the others slunk away and forfeited their claims. This is the first we hear of the family registers, which are so important an institution in Japan, and it cannot be said that it is an encouraging beginning. However, in these days the registers are kept officially, and apparently are not susceptible to corruption, for one hears nothing now of false claims.*

The Soga family had already shown its indifference to imperial claims to divinity by murdering the Emperor Sujun and disposing of the corpse the same day. It being the custom to keep the body for a long time while a tumulus was prepared, the hurried funeral was a shocking indignity. Murder can generally be explained away but not a failure to perform the appropriate rites, which is perhaps a reason why morality begins with obligatory ceremonies, and only in a higher development becomes a matter of conscience. This moral evolution can be conveniently studied in Japanese history, though only in its earlier stages, as it is even to-day more important to perform the correct ritual than to do the right thing.

As one generation succeeded another the Soga only became more ambitious, and, not content with infusing unlimited

* This is an important subject among the Japanese, for the validity of a marriage consists in the due entry in the register. The marriage itself is a family affair—a gathering of representatives of the two families concerned, with an exchange of cups of saké by bride and bridegroom. The signing of a declaration that a marriage has taken place is done subsequently at the local city or village office, and is as often as not put off until there is a baby on the way. Thereafter the entries are made in the register. These registers can be inspected, and when negotiations are made for a marriage where one of the families is not well known to the other, there is generally a quiet inspection, and if one family turns out to be of Eta origin (the Japanese “low caste”) the marriage is called off, just as it would be in America if a similar investigation disclosed a negro ancestry.

WRITING FIRST USED TO ESTABLISH FALSEHOOD

Soga blood into the Imperial family, coveted the throne for themselves. The head of the Nakatomi family, hereditary enemies of the Soga, but long in eclipse, decided that the time had come for a final effort. Soga-no-Yemishi had set aside the heir-apparent and installed the Empress Dowager as Empress, by way of clearing his own path to the throne. Nakatomi Kamatari now conspired with the aggrieved heir-apparent, and contrived a rift in the Soga family by getting him married to a daughter of another Soga. The plan was completely successful, Soga and his son both losing their lives and the Nakatomi influence being restored.

But it was evidently not restored to such an extent that Nakatomi could put any nominee he chose on the throne. The Empress abdicated—a notable event, because it was the first abdication in a history which has a far longer list of such events than that of any other country. Kamatari was unwilling that the heir-apparent, though he had helped him to overthrow the Soga, should succeed, but could not refuse his nomination of his uncle, who ascended the throne with the name of Kotoku (A.D. 645–654).

There had been several oscillations since the introduction of Buddhism, some Emperors inclining towards the older cult, and others being fervent Buddhists. It might be supposed that as the Nakatomi were hereditary guardians of the Shinto cult—a name which had come into use since the Buddhist competition began—Kamatari would have preferred a sovereign who was more inclined to the native gods. But in Kotoku he had one who despised Shinto and was an enthusiastic Buddhist. However, he made the best of the situation. Nakano-oe, again Crown Prince, had the more power for not being on the throne, and was a great admirer of everything Chinese. In the reforms which he instituted he had the willing help of Nakatomi. They introduced the

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Nengo, or era name, which in these latter days corresponds with the reign of the Sovereign, but formerly was changed to celebrate notable events. The first *Nengo* was Taikwa, and the Reforms of Taikwa are regarded as one of the three great administrative changes that have taken place during the history of the country.

Embassy after embassy was dispatched to China, and the Court and administration were entirely remodelled on a Chinese plan. The change was probably even greater than that which took place in 1868, when Japan once more took a foreign model for her guidance. This being the time when Buddhism was at its height in China, the transformation of the State on a Chinese pattern also meant the introduction of Buddhism on the largest scale. Temples were built in great numbers, and Buddhist art found apt pupils in Japan. As for the doctrine, there was a natural inclination to depend on the efficacy of ritual, as Shinto had always done.

We have plenty of evidence that from early times the Japanese paid much regard to family ties, and depended on family solidarity for the successful pursuit of personal ambition. In the Imperial Family there was an inclination, as there has been in most monarchies, to take drastic steps either to clear a way to the throne, or to secure its safety when once possessed, but we have no record of sons making war on fathers, as has happened in many countries. The inculcation of filial piety was not without effect.

It was probably through Chinese teaching and example that the idea of family obligation came to be felt in any marked degree. The *Nihongi*, in 720, states that less than a century and a half earlier, between father and child, husband and wife, there was no mutual commiseration. And the reformers of Taikwa (646) complained that if a man died by the roadside his younger brother would not touch the corpse

WRITING FIRST USED TO ESTABLISH FALSEHOOD

because he considered the trouble of purification greater than the obligations of piety; nor for the same reason would a man help to save even his nearest relative from drowning. It is evident, therefore, that though the sense of moral obligation is believed to have developed from the ritual practices of primitive religion, the evolution is neither rapid nor inevitable, but, on the contrary, religious obligation may be a hindrance to the exercise of natural humanity, as it has often proved to be in much higher forms of society even down to our own day. Taboos and purifications, as a matter of fact, never did develop into moral conduct in Japan: moral conceptions were imported, along with the more material appurtenances of civilisation, from China.

China does not appear to have been properly appreciative of the sincere flattery conveyed in this assiduous imitation. She supported Silla against Paikche, with the consequence that the immediate sequel to the reforms was a Japanese defeat and the loss of all influence on the Korean mainland; and though, as already mentioned, the Emperor Kotoku was a fervent Buddhist, Nakano-oe, who was chiefly responsible for the reforms, was less religious than patriotic. Japan has shown great capacity for adopting those things in which other countries were superior; and as the now obliterated Paikche was the friend who introduced Buddhism to Japan, Nakano-oe may have decided that while the superior Chinese organisation was certainly necessary for a great country, the accompanying religion was of less obvious value. At any rate, when Nakano-oe at last came to the throne (A.D. 661-671), taking the imperial name of Tenchi, he continued to Sinify the country, almost his last act being the promulgation of a code of laws in twenty-two volumes, but he also did much to revive the Shinto cult, of which the previous Emperor had neglected even the ceremonies which

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

it was obligatory for an emperor to perform. Nakatomi Kamatari, of the house which had the hereditary care of Shinto, was his faithful friend, which, no doubt, counted for much in this restoration of the cult to favour. Not long after his accession, Tenchi visited Kamatari, who was ill, and bestowed on him the name of Fujiwara, which became very famous in Japan, for the family proved a prolific one, and for many generations all Imperial consorts were Fujiwaras, while the principal offices in the State were held by the leading members of the family. The chief advantage arising from this arrangement was that it counterbalanced the military mania which has always been the bane of Japan, as the Fujiwara had little taste for soldiering.

Though the tradition was strong that a member of the family should always occupy the throne, there was very little idea of primogeniture: it was generally assumed that the Emperor would choose his own successor, but his decision was frequently overruled by other members of the family and even by the courtiers, sometimes quite openly. For instance, the eldest son of the Emperor Ingyo had been nominated by his father, but the courtiers set him aside in favour of his younger brother, their excuse being that he had taken his full sister to his bed, but perhaps it was the young man's infatuation rather than the consanguinity that was considered improper, for Anko Tenno (see p. 66) married his full sister without reproach.

Taking China as their exemplar, the Japanese raised their Son of Heaven to much greater heights than the descendant of the gods had ever reached when the gods were merely the hovering spirits of barbarian chiefs; but at an early date they made the throne so little attractive that it was seldom that any individual strove hard to plant himself upon it. The Emperor was the slave of official and religious ceremony and had no

WRITING FIRST USED TO ESTABLISH FALSEHOOD

personal liberty. In some cases the prospective Emperor strenuously sought to excuse himself from sovereignty; and while abdications were generally forced, it is probable that they were often welcomed by their victims, for the abdicated Emperor could exert by way of backstairs intrigue some of the power which was denied him altogether while he nominally reigned. Shotoku, as we have seen, managed to avoid enthronement altogether, and Tenchi, though very willing to exalt the cult of imperial divinity, put off his own accession for two whole reigns. Sometimes, it is true, refusal was only a piece of diplomacy. There can be no doubt—unless we assume that the records have no value whatever—that the younger brother of Tenchi really desired the throne, though he made a show of refusing the Emperor's nomination. He had already done all he could to make his position strong by marrying no less than four of the Emperor's daughters (his nieces), two of the daughters of Fujiwara, and a daughter of the house of Soga. But he was uncertain of the position of Ohotomo, Tenchi's favourite son; and when on Temmu's refusal, Ohotomo was nominated, Temmu talked of entering a monastery—harem and all. But it was only done by way of making his position the more secure. He accused Ohotomo (now on the throne with the name Kobun) of conspiring to kill him, and led a force against him, the new Emperor being killed in the resulting tumult, thus enabling Temmu to reign (672–686) with no qualms regarding an ambitious nephew.

An Emperor who had been timid enough to refuse the throne through caution and unscrupulous enough to seize it by violence was not entirely the nonentity that Japanese custom later compelled the Emperors to become. Temmu appears to have been a busy, fussy sort of man, much concerned with regulating everything, especially dress, and

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

constantly passing laws so ill-considered that they had to be repealed forthwith. He possessed in full measure that feeling of exasperation that so often overcomes Japanese who observe that nearly everything they have has been copied from a foreign model. Like any modern reactionary, he wanted Japan to be herself alone. He was an enthusiast for the Gods, but did not attempt to abolish Buddhism, which had grown too strong for that. He attempted, however, to curtail its growing power. There was a Japanese theory that all land belonged to the Emperor, and in accordance with this large grants had been made to branches of the Imperial House for their maintenance, and the temples had obtained similar grants from the Buddhist sovereigns. These he did his best to abolish, but during an illness he made a bid for being on the safe side and gave large new donations of land to the temples. In this, as in many other matters, Temmu was remarkably typical of his countrymen—capable of a certain amount of bigotry, yet thinking, with regard to other faiths, that there might be something in them, and taking it for granted that he could serve as many spiritual masters as necessary.

In the year 681 Temmu gave orders for the compilation of a national history, and had it written in the Japanese language. We may suppose with a good deal of confidence that there had already been sufficient experimenting in the writing of Japanese for a system, however clumsy and irregular, to have developed; and it is not without significance that the first writings in Japan that we hear of, in the Chinese language, were those fraudulent family registers or histories to which the Emperor Ingyo objected, and that the earliest writings in the Japanese language which have come down to us are a history in which facts take a position subordinate to the fictions which the Emperor thought it expedient that

WRITING FIRST USED TO ESTABLISH FALSEHOOD

his subjects should believe. It is significant because, from those days to these, boldness in prevarication has marked Imperial rescripts, official proclamations, and minor communiqués alike.

The method by which this history, called the *Kojiki*, or Record of Ancient Matters, was compiled, was peculiar. There was one Aré, who had a wonderful memory; and he was commanded to learn the correct genealogies of the Emperors, because these had become extremely faulty, and were in some danger of causing the truth to be entirely lost. Considering that for two or three hundred years things that had to be remembered had been committed to writing, this procedure seems to be inexplicable, until we remember that the professional story-teller, who purveys heroic histories, like the minstrels in the partially literate days of the West, is still in the land. In those early days the folklore was mainly the story-teller's province, while the genealogies proper, and other matters more intricate than romantic, were set down in Chinese by scribes who tended to favour continental ideas. Aré was one who knew the whole of the ancient stories and had the complete repertoire on the tip of his tongue. These he repeated to the Emperor, who corrected them according to his own ideas, and Aré perfected himself in the correct versions.

The work was far from complete when Temmu died, and was succeeded by his widow, a daughter of Tenchi, and later by her grandson, these two reigns lasting twenty-one years. Then another daughter of Tenchi (and another widow of Temmu) became Empress, taking the name Gemmyo, and she gave orders that the *Kojiki* be completed, which was achieved in A.D. 712. Apparently Yasumaro the scribe and Aré the reciter were both still living, and between them they produced a remarkable piece of work. But it did not quite

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

satisfy Gemmyo's daughter, Gensho, who succeeded her mother on the throne, and under her auspices (though the original command may have been given by Gemmyo) the *Nihongi* was written, being completed in 720, and bringing Japanese history down to the abdication of Jito, Temmu's first widow-empress, in 701.

The script of the *Kojiki* can never have been easy even for the most expert of Japanese scholars. It was written entirely in Chinese characters, but these were a preposterous mixture of the syllabic and ideographic, so that it was necessary to know two languages in order to read one. In the *Nihongi*, which was composed in Chinese and was easier to read, the stories told in the *Kojiki* are often elaborated, names and incidents are introduced or omitted, and all sorts of variations made without adding in any way to the consistency or credibility of the book. Not only are dates and incidents in the two books irreconcilable with each other, but neither the *Kojiki* nor *Nihongi* is consistent in itself. However, apart from the very scanty Chinese fragments, they are all that we have regarding the early history of Japan.

Many of the facts relating to the introduction of Buddhism into Japan as set forth above have been derived from these two sources, and as they were still comparatively recent when the books were written, more reliance can be placed on them than on the folklore, the manipulation of which was the chief reason for compiling these works. Now we must go back to the beginning and see what can be believed, and what can be deduced and guessed from these quaint and curious volumes of forgotten lore. They were not made in a scientific spirit but the very reverse; they were not a compilation of folklore and legend, made for the purpose of rescuing what could be saved of the fragments of a history that was vanishing because it had not been written. They

WRITING FIRST USED TO ESTABLISH FALSEHOOD

were a deliberate travesty of all the surviving legends, put together for the purpose of proving that the Imperial Family was of divine descent and appointed by their ancestress, the Sun Goddess, to rule the world. And here again we have a notable expansion of meaning. The world, among the neolithic Japanese, meant all that they knew; and perhaps they knew that in whatever direction they walked they would come to the sea. Further than that the imagination did not travel.

In the beginning: "The names of the Deities that were born in the Plain of High Heaven when the Heaven and Earth began were the Deity Master-of-the-August-Centre-of-Heaven, next the High-August-Producing-Wondrous Deity, next the Divine-Producing-Wondrous Deity. These three Deities were all Deities born alone, and hid their persons."* The Master of the August Centre of Heaven, Ame-no-Minakanushi-no-Kami, is the subject of a learned discourse by Dr. Kato Genchi,† who is of opinion that this deity, who was not made, nor created, nor begotten, but apparently died, was the endeavour of Primitive Monotheism to conceive of an omnipotent, immanent God. He admits that the conception is a very dim one, as he is mentioned only in the opening sentence of the *Kojiki*. Indeed, Dr. Kato says, "Some native scholars hold the opinion that the god Ame-no-Minakanushi was a later fabrication in Japan by the Japanese for themselves when they became familiar with Chinese culture, making use of the Chinese religious idea of Shangti, or the Chinese Lord on High, but this point of

* *Kojiki*, trans. Chamberlain, Kobe: J. L. Thompson & Co., Ltd., p. 17. The learned translator interprets the last sentence thus: "i.e. they all came into existence without being procreated in the manner usual with both gods and men, and afterwards disappeared, i.e. died."

† *A Study of Shinto: the Religion of the Japanese Nation*. Meiji Japan Society, pp. 62 et seq., also Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

argument may not seem quite convincing, from the historical viewpoint."

In any case, the Japanese capacity for abstract thinking was exhausted by this effort, and even here the pre-existence of heaven was necessary. As recently as 1935 a Japanese newspaper, commenting on a dispute which had arisen regarding a Catholic mission, said that the misunderstanding was caused through the missionaries "pushing the idea of monotheism too far." Perhaps the Japanese mind merely refuses to embrace an idea which would place the Emperor in subjection to a higher Power, but whatever the cause, it appears to be true that there is an invincible repugnance to monotheism.

A number of other deities, equally shadowy, pass, and then we have Izanagi, the Male-who-Invites, and Izanami, the Female-who-Invites, who might be called personifications of sex-appeal. This queer couple are a combination of childish sexuality and crude sexual symbolism, which has not passed unnoticed by the psychoanalysts. Between them they produce innumerable islands, then they produce a great number of gods. These gods have various strange names—Great House Prince, Great Ocean Possessor, Princess of Swift Autumn, Foam-Calm, Heavenly Water-drawing Gourd Possessor—obviously animistic nature-names, yet with little character and so unconnected and often so trivial as to be almost meaningless. Finally Izanami gives birth to a Fire deity, and dies of it, like Semele. She is buried near Idzumo, and goes to the underworld, like any mortal. Izanagi following her, as Orpheus sought the dead Eurydice, incurs her wrath by intruding into the place where Thunder-gods have infested her decaying body, and is pursued by furies of various kinds. On his return from the underworld he cleanses himself, and deities spring up in renewed abundance

WRITING FIRST USED TO ESTABLISH FALSEHOOD

from everything, including his clothes, that he casts away—sea deities, sky deities, and godlings with cumbersome and meaningless names.

He completed his purification with the production of the Sun Goddess from his left eye, the Moon God from his right eye, and the Impetuous Male Deity (often conjectured to be a Storm God) from the blowing of his nose.

The great majority of these deities are simply names, without characters or attributes. The whole business of this procreative purification bears so striking a resemblance to a Chinese myth that it has evidently been borrowed and “improved upon.” The Moon God is no more heard of after his “birth,”* but the Sun Goddess Amaterasu and the Impetuous Male Deity Susa-no-o have many stories told of them. Susa-no-o’s flinging of a flayed piebald horse through the roof of the celestial weaving hall has been claimed by psychoanalysts as in some way sexually symbolic; but the retirement of the Sun Goddess, in high dudgeon, into a cave, and her enticement out of it by incantations—or, rather, by an indecent song-and-dance—is quite in the tradition of the nature-stories of a primitive race trying to account for an eclipse of the sun.

There is a mass of verbiage in this puerile mythology for which we cannot hold the Chinese responsible, but it is significant that even the Master of the August Centre of Heaven is under suspicion of being a Japanese disguise of Shangti, and that the final scene in the purification of Izanagi bears an unmistakable likeness to a parent myth from China, though their Japanese adaptors have invested them with a

* Until modern times. Tenrikyo and Omotokyo were inspired by Kuni-Tokotachi-no-Mikoto, who somehow supplanted Ame-no-Minakanushi-no-Kami, and Tenrikyo identifies him with the Moon God. See pp. 181–187.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

new significance by having Izanami buried in Idzumo and Izanagi purified in Hyuga. Geographical legend-cycles had to be connected somehow, for the object of the compilation of the *Kojiki* was to bring together Hyuga (in Kyushu), Idzumo (on the Japan Sea), and Yamato (Central Japan) and dovetail the legends of each place in such a manner that the claim of the Yamato chieftains to rule (which, like all merely military conquests, was precarious) should be firmly founded on the everlasting rock of fraudulent history and enforced by the commands of imaginary gods.

To have improved the Sun Goddess legend with Chinese details was really quite unnecessary, for continental origins were already embodied in the folk tales, but it may have served to disguise a Polynesian origin. A very lame story is told of Susa-no-o, which suggests either that the inventive genius of the Emperor Temmu flagged under the strain which he put upon it, or that the marvellous memory of Aré, the reciter, was less infallible than it had been reputed to be. After his quarrel with the Sun Goddess, the Congregation of Gods gave Susa-no-o the lordship of the sea, and banished him to the lower regions—or perhaps they offered him the choice of these outcastings. It is not a point of great importance because he went to Korea instead, and presently came back again, landing in Idzumo. Here he played St. George to an excessively monstrous dragon—one so large that its legs (or tails) covered eight valleys, and so fierce that it was in the habit of devastating the country and devouring maidens. When Susa-no-o landed, the last of a large family of maidens was about to be devoured, she being herself a goddess and the sole uneaten daughter of the August Foot-stroking Deity and the August Hand-stroking Deity. It would be of interest to know just what godship amounted to when it was combined with such supine

WRITING FIRST USED TO ESTABLISH FALSEHOOD

helplessness. Susa-no-o, being promised the daughter if he could save her, bade the parents bring eight tubs of saké and place them in the line of the dragon's approach. This being done, the dragon plunged his eight heads in them simultaneously and sucked up the potent liquor, with the result that he shut his sixteen eyes and went to sleep. The cunning Susa-no-o proceeded to chop him up, and broke his sword across one of the tails. This tail was found to contain a sword, which Susa-no-o presented to his sister the Sun Goddess, and this very sword, scabbarded and swathed in many wrappings of brocade, lies to this day in the Family Shrine of the Imperial House in Tokyo, and no Japanese dare, on pain of being charged with *lèse-majesté*, express a doubt as to its authenticity.*

In this manner the *Kojiki* holds out the olive-branch to the conquered Idzumo—a method which, however it might be criticised for its lack of truthfulness, shows a certain worldly wisdom and even generosity such as victors, even to the third and fourth generations, seldom exhibit.

The dragon, upon whose extensive cuticle trees and vegetables grew, warms the heart of the learned in folklore as it is so obvious a description of a river-system, and the sword in one tail is almost as obviously a deposit of iron. There is a great deal which is not susceptible of such easy interpretation, but we must be grateful for even a little plausible parable amidst so voluminous a farrago of nonsense. In so far, however, as Susa-no-o is to be regarded as a hero-myth rather than a pure invention, it seems not unreasonable to see in him a Korean who migrated to Japan (no doubt with some followers). In Eastern Korea the knowledge of iron-working is said to have antedated the art in

* Regarding the necessity for orthodox belief in the Three Sacred Treasures, see pp. 141–143.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

China, being practised by the Tungus tribes there, and the Japanese are believed to have learnt it from the Koreans. We may therefore regard Susa-no-o as a fanciful memory of the earliest of the immigrants who brought the culture of the mainland to Japan. That he should become a deity is nothing surprising, for in that age it was the rule rather than the exception to be a deity, but such gods were further from any modern conception of deity than the kings who plundered Lot were from Tsar and Kaiser.

This Korean of many wives comes down in legend as a prodigious begetter of children, one of whom, named Onamochi (or, according to some variants, a grandson of Onamochi), ultimately came to an agreement with the descendants of the Sun Goddess to hand over the lordship of Idzumo to her family, and keep the religious headship of the country, on which account the Great Shrine at Kitsuki is dedicated to him, and every year all the gods in Japan resort thither, leaving the country as "godless" as Soviet Russia for a season. As we have already seen (page 26, above), Onamochi was regarded as the Earth Deity of Korea before he fulfilled this function in Idzumo. It is impossible to rationalise the entirely irrational in folklore; but the patriotic Japanese commentators would have us believe that Idzumo took Korea under its sway, which was the beginning of the Japanese claims to Korea, or was found to be so afterwards, and made the excuse for the establishment of the Chosen Jinja, dedicated to Onamochi; and the Chosen Jinja became the excuse for the tribal shrines in Shantung, Manchuria, Formosa, and whenever Japan's conquering arms carried the banner of the Sun Goddess.

The Sun Goddess herself was a Yamato deity, or at least an immigrant into Yamato, but the conquerors came from Kyushu, and though the Kyushu folk are supposed to have

WRITING FIRST USED TO ESTABLISH FALSEHOOD

been of a Malay stock, there seems to have been no living tradition of a southern origin or even of a migration from across the sea. But a dim legend that they had come in great glory from somewhere was utilised by the ingenious compilers of the *Kojiki* in their endeavour to make a united kingdom as by divine ordinance instead of by conquest.

“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory!” The cry is neither one of humble gratitude nor is it an arrogant claim to the ambassadorship of heaven. It is rather a gesture of defence. Men will not long tolerate, even on the part of their conqueror, an assertion of innate superiority, and such a pretence would soon become intolerably disturbing to the mind of the claimant. But if the responsibility be placed on the shoulders of the supernatural, then all may be well. The Yamato chiefs badly needed the moral support of a general belief in their right to rule, and the patching up of the legends provided them with some show of an authority more impressive than a mere conquest.

So the Sun Goddess, having promised to Onamochi that he should have the authority in heavenly things if he would quietly abandon the secular rule to her family, “the August Grandchild, Ninigi-no-Mikoto, left his heavenly seat and, ‘thrusting apart the many-piled clouds of heaven, clove his way with an awful way-cleaving,’ and descended to earth. He alighted in the western island of Kyushu—a significant point, as we shall see—and he had with him as attendants the divine ancestors of a number of hereditary corporations, such as the ritualists, the exorcists, the jewel-makers, the shield-makers, the mirror-makers, and so on. He carried as tokens of his divine mission three treasures, a jewel, a sword and a mirror, which he had received from the Sun Goddess when she declared that he should rule the fertile rice-ear land

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

of Japan and his dynasty should prosper and endure for ever."*

Translated into sonorous and dignified language, the "way-cleaving" business sounds sufficiently impressive, but in the primitive folktale it was probably about on a level with the heroic nursery saga of Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Goosy-poosy and Ducky-daddles, who went to tell the King that the sky was falling. What seems most significant here is the resemblance between this story and the sending of Su Fu with a company of cunning workmen by the Emperor Hwangti. We have seen how the Korean who came to Idzumo was deified, if he needed deification in a country where even distressed peasants were deities. We have also seen how, at a much later date, the descendants of Chinese and Korean immigrants became noble families. There is, then, nothing surprising in Su Fu and his party coming out of the sky instead of out of the sea, and becoming culture heroes, or rather culture deities. The mild Taoist would have been astonished at his apotheosis, but the real matter for astonishment is the manner in which, through the influence of more comprehensive ideas, the heroes of these primitive tales of a grandfather take on a dignity of the same order as that of the Creator of the universe.

The arrival of a comparatively high yet still illiterate culture must have effects quite different from that of a culture equipped with the arts and letters. Its bearers are looked up to, but in numbers they are so small as to be quickly submerged, their first proceeding, as men would be in a large majority, being to intermarry with the people among whom they settled. Some tradition would be carried on of their having come from a wonderful and superior place—naturally "heaven", and it is as natural that

* Sansom, *Japan*, pp. 23-24.

WRITING FIRST USED TO ESTABLISH FALSEHOOD

the makers of armour, of mirrors, and jewels, and the dealers in charms and exorcisms, should be remembered as the bearers of culture when the coming of the much more important arts of agriculture, weaving and pottery had been forgotten, being things that the common people had presumably always done.

It would be foolish to dogmatise about so shadowy a figure as Su Fu. All that one can say positively is that he or some other Chinese of that or an even earlier period brought the arts of agriculture, weaving and pottery to the primitives of Japan. Legend has another fate for Su Fu. This tale has it that Hwangti found his powers failing, and as he greatly desired to enjoy life for some time to come, he asked if anybody knew the whereabouts of Mount Horai, from whose side the elixir of life gushed. Su Fu said he did, so he was put into a boat with a number of young men and women and pushed out to sea. They all arrived at the foot of Mount Fuji and decided not to return, as there was no elixir, and their own lives would be short if they failed in their mission. So they founded a sort of colony there, became the guardians of the mountain, and levied toll on the pilgrims, whom they greatly impressed by informing them that if they uttered a word of what they had seen on the mountain they would die. And there was something in it, too, for as late as 1441, one who was commanded by the Shogun Yoshinori to tell, died painfully in the act of uttering a single sentence. But even this legend, which de Benneville retails in his *Oguri Hangwan*, is not entirely safe from the sceptic, for Kumano, not far from Ise, also claims Su Fu.

Exactly where the Yamato and the Kyushu cycles of legends stand in this synthetic mythology is far from certain. There is a somewhat elaborate story of how Jimmu Tenno, grandson of the divine grandson Ninigi-no-Mikoto, started

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

of an exchange of courtesies than an acknowledgement of subjection.

It was certainly about this period that records began to take the place of legend—not very quickly, indeed, for Ojin, who appears to have been a peaceable sort of person, became deified as Hachiman, the God of War, his mother's exploits being credited to him; and his son Nintoku reigned for eighty-seven years and died at the age of a hundred and ten; but after him there is a drop: miracles cease, Emperors gradually decline to the stature of ordinary men, and live no longer than their subjects. But, of course, writing does not automatically produce truth. The inaccuracies of oral tradition, which convert men into gods and double their height and their ages in a couple of generations, are not due simply to the fallibility of human memory, but result almost entirely from attempts to improve the story. The desire persists after the introduction of writing, but it manifests itself more subtly.

Even the Emperor Temmu could not, like Psalmanazar with his book on Formosa, or Joseph Smith with the *Book of Mormon*, indulge in a work of pure fancy. Though he was a divine potentate he could not make something entirely new acceptable to his people, even if he had the wit to invent it. Indeed, his task was to alter the stories only so much as would make them fit together and give him support in his claim that his family were ordained rulers of the world—or as much of it as he knew about—"before God fashioned star or sun." Were the *Kojiki* to be written to-day, a much more perfect work might be expected, for not only has the art of lying improved, but the art of imposing a convenient orthodoxy on nations has, with the aid of the Press and of scientific weapons, reached a point which barbarous despots hardly dreamed of.

However, when once a written authority has been accepted,

WRITING FIRST USED TO ESTABLISH FALSEHOOD

it is comparatively safe from criticism because not many people trouble to read it; and, as regards the *Kojiki*, there were few people who at any one time could read it. But, duly copied and carefully kept, it survived earthquake, fire, and civil war, and, at a time when sacred books in the West were being called in question, their authority disputed and their authorship investigated, the *Kojiki* came into its own. In its inception it had been a very modest fraud. It was indeed a medley of Chinese myth, primitive animism, Polynesian cosmogony, sex symbolism, and tendentious history, but it was intended to serve the purpose of satisfying all the Emperor's subjects that his claim to rule was well founded. To seek present distinction by romanticising past history seems to be a common failing of the human race, and Cassius' description of how

Æneas, our great ancestor,
Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder,
The old Anchises bear,

is perhaps not much more authentic history than the *Kojiki's* story of how Ninigi-no-Mikoto, grandson of Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, left his place on the Plain of High Heaven and descended on Japan in power and great glory to establish a kingdom there.

As for the different cycles of legends woven together, Idzumo appears to have been the most prolific of the sources, if we may judge by the amount of space occupied by the legends of Susa-no-o and his descendants. They are also rather more human than the tales of more Olympian character, which were presumably of Yamato or Kyushu origin, and often so meaningless that one suspects they were largely barbaric jingles, depending as much upon sound as on sense. They may have some anthropological value, but of a

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

dubious kind, for it is impossible to tell what has been added. That the Sun Goddess sat among her maidens weaving proves no more than that the wife of a chieftain in the seventh century might do the same; and that Susa-no-o flayed a colt and broke down the banks between the ricefields is no evidence whatever that the Japanese cultivated rice or kept horses before these things were brought to them from China. And when folktales tell us of the gods flourishing swords and of goddesses handling mirrors, we need not be deterred by such evidences of metallurgy from supposing these gods to be neolithic chiefs.

We do gather that in the eighth century ideas were still somewhat crude with reference to marriage, which is still far from being purged of promiscuity. A girl was practically in the gift of her father, and belonged to her husband. This being so, there was far less sexual latitude allowed to a woman than to a man; but though woman had learnt that her place was the home, we are quite safe in saying that the Japanese never conceived the idea of *purdah*. In the Heian era, ninth to twelfth centuries, when leisure and learning were cultivated, we are left in no doubt that ladies had lovers even when they also had husbands, but these records compiled in the late seventh and early eighth centuries tell of spontaneous matings and of widows who remarry, but not of wives who are unfaithful or maidens who are wanton. And if they leave the Gods of High Heaven in a state of illiteracy, that is only because their compilers were very conscious that they still had to seek the aid of immigrant scholars from the mainland for progress in the art of writing.

From the stories of the gods and their numerous amours, de Benneville deduces an early society like that of Punalua, and he credits the ladies of the time with a great talent for intrigue, but this talent is mostly exercised in saving a husband

WRITING FIRST USED TO ESTABLISH FALSEHOOD

or lover from the wiles of his enemies, or in circumventing a husband's wandering fancy. There is neither endogamy nor exogamy, and none of the "horror of incest" the alleged existence of which in primitive societies has been the subject of much debate among anthropologists. Almost the only presumably forbidden degrees, at least so far as the Imperial Family was concerned, were mother, daughter and step-daughter. Marriage with half-sisters, nieces and aunts was very common, in fact usual.

Sending an unsatisfactory wife back to her father is a Japanese custom still very much in vogue, and it has an excellent precedent. Ninigi-no-Mikoto, when he was sent down to earth by his August Grandmother the Sun Goddess to establish a kingdom there, met Princess Blossoming-like-the-Flowers, and asked her father for her. The father, like Laban, had two daughters, and could not serve the younger first, so he sent them both. But Ninigi was no Jacob, and Princess Long-as-the-Rocks was not merely tender-eyed, like Leah, but hideously ugly, so he sent her back forthwith, whereupon she cursed the progeny of Ninigi and her sister, and that is why, though the Emperors of the unbroken line then established are God Incarnate, they live no longer than ordinary men. Yet dissatisfied bridegrooms have never been impressed by this: rather they have taken the example of Ninigi as an authoritative precedent.

It would be as foolish to look for moral lessons in folklore as to search a thistle-bed for figs, and if scholars sometimes seem to be rather unreasonable in their complaints that Shinto is destitute of moral ideas, that is mainly because in our own day official purveyors of patriotism have tried to find in the puerile stories of the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* a compendium of morals such as the Bible and the Koran supply to Christians and Moslems, and a multitude of treatises furnish

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

for Buddhists. The brains of the Education Department have been exercised to extract moral lessons from such stories as that of the skinned hare who took his troubles to Onamochi, the Earth-God of Idzumo. The hare, by a trick, had induced the crocodiles (or sharks) to make a bridge for him from Oki Island to the mainland, and as he jeered at the last one for being such a fool, the creature made a snap at him and got his pelt. The eighty brethren of Onamochi, passing that way in quest of a Princess (not with honourable intentions), played a trick on the hare by telling him to bathe in the sea and lie in the wind—which, of course, added much to his discomfort. Onamochi advised the unhappy hare to bathe in fresh water and powder himself with sedge-pollen, which made him well again. The hare, himself a deity, went off, promising the Princess to Onamochi.

This veracious story . . . figures largely as one of the moral tales of the text book of the primary schools. The teachers are to implant all the grave import of generosity, gratitude, loyalty in friendship, rebuke of cruelty and gratuitous craft, the reward granted to good conduct, constant attendance, and industry as our prize books put it, all to be drawn from this affecting tale of the warren. . . . Lucian taught morality by laughing the old myths out of court. And Twentieth-century Japan teaches it by setting them on a pedestal for worship. One might as well make Jack and the Beanstalk or Puss-in-Boots the basis of ethics.*

The question whether the Hare of Inaba's *wani*, whose backs he used as a pontoon bridge, were crocodiles or sharks, has been debated. Perhaps it does not matter very much: on the other hand, it may have value as an indication of the origin of the non-continental forbears of the Japanese. If crocodiles, the evidence would be in favour of the Philippines or Borneo, and if sharks, in favour of Polynesia. The

* De Benneville, *Saito Musashi-bo Benkei*, i, p. 24.

WRITING FIRST USED TO ESTABLISH FALSEHOOD

resemblances to the Hawaiian volcanic myth found in parts of the mixed mythology of Japan point definitely to a contribution from this quarter.* It is likely also that, extensively as the Japanese have borrowed from China to give substance to their mythology, the Polynesian contribution may have had a considerable part in creating the imperial divinity idea, which, at first merely curious, has become both ridiculous and menacing. In the supplementary volume entitled *Aftermath* of Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough*, we read, "Chiefs and others who claim to be incarnate human gods abounded among the Polynesians of the Pacific islands. On this subject we have the excellent evidence of the American ethnographer, Horatio Hale, who shared in the American expedition of 1839-1842, while the Polynesian system of religion and polity was still in full bloom."

Anthropologists have supposed that because the Japanese are a highly cultured people, they do not afford a suitable field for their investigations. It is true that the Japanese are not unsophisticated children of nature, but, when the sophistication is cleared away, we find a body of thought rich with the crudest conceptions of savage life still functioning. We can see how rapid is the mental growth when the previously "untutored mind" is introduced to more transcendental ideas. Temmu felt that not only Japanese folklore must be improved upon but that it must be put into Chinese writing, in which the Japanese language gained a scope and meaning that by itself it lacked. His grandson Mommu had learnt the lesson so well that his edict on ascending the throne describes him as "Manifest God, ruling over the Great Land of Many Islands in performance of the task of this High Throne of Heavenly Sun Succession, in the same wise as the August Child of the God of Heaven, as it was decreed by the God

* J. Macmillan Brown, *Peoples and Problems of the Pacific*, ii, pp. 132-141.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

which is in Heaven, that from the beginning of the High Plain of Heaven, through the reigns of our Distant Ancestors down to these days and onwards, Sovereign August Children should be born in succession for ever to succeed to the rule of the Great Land of Many Islands.”* A Yamato chief had always been a deity, but there were “evil deities,” “deities that buzzed like flies,” and helpless old deities living in fear of dragons. But now, since the introduction of Buddhism, the Yamato chieftain was shining in a glory reflected from some of the loftiest of all conceptions of the human mind.

* Sansom, *Japan*, pp. 175–176.

CHAPTER III

THE JAPANESE AS HEAD-HUNTERS



WHILE this study is primarily concerned with religious beliefs and observances, we may diverge at this point to consider a custom which, while hardly religious, has aspects verging on the religious, and which has a considerable social importance. The custom of head-hunting, of which the Japanese are the foremost exponents, is extraordinarily widespread. We need not notice here its manifestations in West Africa or the art of shrinking the head to the size of an orange as practised in Ecuador. They may have no more connection with Japanese head-hunting than the decapitation which was the privilege of a gentleman in England, the guillotine which gave emphasis to the revolution in France, or the axe which to-day teaches Germans to be loyal to the Fuehrer. It may well be supposed that the swiftness and spectacular completeness of death by decapitation must in many lands have seemed to give it a special dramatic value. To the very practical Chinese, decapitation probably seemed simply the shortest and surest way with a malefactor, and this aspect of the matter doubtless appealed to the Japanese when they adopted this Chinese method of execution.

Beheading, however, had much more significance in Japan, for it is connected with the custom which is found in the Naga Hills, Assam, vestigially in Burma, down through

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Sumatra to the Malay archipelago, Borneo, New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, the Philippines and Formosa. Throughout this wide distribution the head is regarded as a trophy—an idea which is very different from the merely utilitarian one of emphasised killing. It is practised by men of differing race and diverse languages, but its sentimental aspect is sufficient proof of its common cultural origin—if this is not an undue stretching of the word cultural.

Anthropologists have not given this subject the attention that it deserves. In the *Golden Bough* it is very scantily referred to as a fertility rite, and then dropped, without a word as to its distribution or social significance. The common belief in Europe is that the taking of a head, where this practice prevails, is necessary as a proof of virility before a young man can get a wife, but that seems a rather too easy explanation. The Japanese call the hill tribes in Formosa *seibanjin*, or “raw savages,” and always emphasise their ferocity; they seem to be quite uninterested in their anthropological problems, but very keen on their “control” and “civilisation”. The furtive, cringing look of those who are left testifies to the severity with which they have been handled. Occasionally the ravishing of their women,* the forced labour to which they are subject, or desperation at being ordered to change their habitat, results in a rising, in which it is always recorded that a certain number of Japanese heads have been taken. This is by way of revenge with its most emphatic gesture rather than anything like a fertility rite or an adolescent proof of virility. Experience of Chinese and of missionaries would seem to show that where the *seibanjin* cease to fear that their neighbours may be hostile, they do not take their heads. But they are being so thoroughly “civilised” that it

* This reason was given in the Japanese Diet after some of the most recent risings.

THE JAPANESE AS HEAD-HUNTERS

is not likely that any reliable anthropologist will ever be able to discover their real sentiments.

Though the Chinese in Formosa came to a *modus vivendi* with the savages, it was not the same everywhere. Macmillan Brown, in *Peoples and Problems of the Pacific*, speaks of head-hunting threatening to depopulate the Solomon Islands early in the nineteenth century, and he gives a photograph of a head-hunter who is an indubitable Papuan. That would look as though the Papuans had taken up head-hunting quite recently and exhibited the zeal of converts.

In all probability head-hunting first began in Japan and spread thence to places where Japanese adventurers took a leading place among the tribes. It certainly has a very respectable antiquity and is deeply embedded in the Japanese mind. It occurred first on the Plain of High Heaven before time began. Izanagi and his sister Izanami, the universal progenitors, begat innumerable islands and deities, but, as already related, Izanami died in giving birth to the Fire-God. This Fire-God, however, was no culture-hero, no Prometheus, bringing to man an inestimable gift from heaven. He was only an unfortunate accident, and the fond husband's grief was much greater than his paternal affection, which is not to be wondered at after such innumerable procreations, so he took his sword and smote off the head of the disastrous infant. From the blood of this prepotent race, which bespattered the sword, many more deities were born.

For a thousand years after time began we hear no more of decapitation, but this is not surprising, for the history of those times is as tenuous as a comet's tail, and what little substance there can be found is borrowed from here and there in order to make some kind of record. When we do hear of a head being lost, at the beginning of the fifth century, the victim is the Emperor Richiu's brother, who had had

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

the presumption to set fire to the palace while Richiu was engaged in a drinking bout. The Emperor was saved, and, as he suspected another brother, Midzu, of being also in the conspiracy to destroy him, he demanded of him that he bring the head of Sumi, the incendiary. Midzu hired a soldier named Sobahari for this purpose, who accomplished his task by thrusting Sumi through with a spear when he was in the privy. This was another precedent, for it became a favourite mode of assassination later. Having brought the head of Sumi, Sobahari was invited by Midzu to have a drink, and, when his head was tilted back to swallow, Midzu performed a neat decapitation from the front—a comparatively rare example of “tooling”. The order to bring in a head and the murder in the privy are related in such a matter-of-fact manner that they were obviously items in a vendetta routine which was already well established at the time of the compilation of the *Kojiki*.

Half a century later—in A.D. 452 according to the *Kojiki*—the Emperor himself was the victim of a head-hunt. Anko Tenno, being annoyed with his uncle, had him executed (apparently by hirelings to whom murder was a job, not a ritual), and made the widow his Empress, though, as it happened, she was his own full sister! She had a son, Mayowa, by her first husband, and this child, at the age of seven, overheard his august stepfather confess to the Empress that he feared the boy, when he grew up, would seek vengeance for his father's death. The intelligent lad, who was struck by the Confucian saying which Anko Tenno had quoted, that one cannot live under the same heaven with the slayer of one's father, watched for an opportunity, which came when Anko, swoln with wine, was sleeping with his head on the Empress's lap. Young Mayowa took a sword and lopped the head off.

Yuriaku, a brother of Anko, succeeded, and Mayowa took

THE JAPANESE AS HEAD-HUNTERS

refuge with the Chieftain of Tsubaru. The new Emperor, thinking it unsafe to have him about, led a force against Tsubaru and was storming his house, when, seeing the position was hopeless, Tsubaru first killed Mayowa, and then cut off his own head! Again the decapitation is a double one, the vendetta evidently demanding not merely a life for a life but a head for a head.

It is singular that Europeans, while ignoring the significance of decapitation, have been inclined to glorify *harakiri*, or belly-cutting, which seems to gain a special *cachet* from the fact, which every writer on the subject duly retails, that the Japanese much prefer to call it *seppuku*, or incision of the abdomen. A resolute jab in the belly insures death, even though it be a somewhat painful one, within a short time, and this is much better than capture by a cruel and merciless enemy.

For four hundred and fifty years after the halcyon days of the Heian era passed away, Japan enjoyed but little rest from internecine strife, but was the prey of military factions, whoever had the control of the Emperor being the ruler of the country. The war between the Taira and Minamoto families in the latter part of the twelfth century was the epic period of Japanese history—or would be but for the manifold savageries and treacheries that distinguished it. It was then that suicide rather than capture became the custom, and, combined with the fact that changes of allegiance were common enough when dictated by interest, is a sufficiently clear indication that the civil wars developed a type of warfare in which the honourable treatment of prisoners was unknown.*

* This may surprise the foreign admirers of Bushido, who will call to mind the humane treatment afforded Russian prisoners in 1904-5, and German prisoners in 1914-18. In these cases the eyes of the world were on Japan. In the intervention in Siberia, 1918-22, it was different. Russians were generally massacred and the statement that they were Bolsheviks was sufficient excuse. Japanese seldom take Chinese prisoners, except to kill them. The practice of *harakiri* on the battlefield needs no further explanation.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Historians have been sufficiently interested in the quasi-chivalrous practice, as Europeans deem it, of *harakiri*, to take note of its occurrences in recorded history, though they are apt to ignore the much more frequent record of decapitation. The first recorded belly-cutting was in 1170, the second in 1180. Suicide rather than capture did not begin with these instances. It had already developed a technique and these were cases that happened to be specially notable.

Our third instance, in 1187, has often been described as the most magnificent of all belly-slittings in Japan. Yoritomo, a capable but dour and unlovable man of the Minamoto clan, had routed the Taira clan at the great sea fight of Dan-no-ura, by the ingenious but not original expedient of buying up three hundred of the Taira's ships.

That decided the fate of the day. The Taira were beaten and their flagship taken, and all was over except the slaughter of the vanquished. It was carried out with ruthless cruelty. The sea was red with Taira blood, and after the battle every member or adherent of the family who could be found, men, women, or children, high and low without distinction, were mercilessly slain, women only being spared to be placed in the public brothels, gently-bred ladies of the Court and kitchen-wenchies all alike. Kiyomori's own family was exterminated, either in the battle or afterwards at the executioner's hands.

"Yoritomo sent his father-in-law to the capital to offer rewards for the discovery of the seed of the Taira who were lying concealed here and there. He buried the young boys alive and put to the sword all those who were approaching manhood. Their mothers and nurses died one by one after them, and lamentations were heard on all sides" (*Nihon Gwaishi*).*

Thereafter Yoritomo, having exterminated his enemies, turned against his brother Yoshitsune, the more brilliant soldier and the more popular leader, who, with a few

* Longford, *Japan*, p. 78.

THE JAPANESE AS HEAD-HUNTERS

followers, fled to the far north. One of these, named Tadanobu, like many another mighty man of valour, was betrayed into the hands of the liars in wait by a harlot. Her he strangled with his hands and cast the body at his enemies, whom he then waved back, and invited them to see how Yoshitsune's men could die. Without further ado, he ripped his belly very completely, and cut off his own head!

This feat of cutting off one's own head, of which two famous instances have now been cited, was supposed to be within the competency of every good samurai, but unfortunately it is a performance which does not permit of preliminary practice.*

To finish the story of Tadanobu, who thus dramatically avoided the certainty, if he were taken alive, of being tortured to betray his leader: the head, carefully salted and packed in a head-box, was sent to Yoritomo, who expressed sorrow that so brave a man had died and declared that he would have made him governor of a province. But Yoshitsune's followers knew Yoritomo better than to seek such honours for themselves. The fugitive and his last remaining men committed *harakiri*, and their heads were cut off and taken to Yoritomo, Yoshitsune's being pickled in strong wine and sent in a lacquer head-box. That is the point which nowadays is overlooked—that the taking of the head was of more importance than the *harakiri*, which was merely a way of escape.

The wars between the Taira and the Minamoto were carried on to the end with such savagery that *harakiri* on the battlefield, which had been a novelty at their beginning, was quite a convention at their end. But head-hunting was as common at the beginning as at the end. There was a certain utility in viewing an enemy's head. A little gloating

* For a third example of self-decapitation, see p. 101.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

cheers the heart, and as nobody would risk meeting a hostile chieftain in the field if he could get him murdered instead, those who had hired assassins always wanted to see the head so as to be assured that the money had really been earned; and a counting and cataloguing of heads after a battle gave a more exact idea of the extent of the victory than the mere fact that some were killed and the rest had fled.

When the victor got the head, he naturally exposed it for the admiration of his sycophants, and if friends could get away with the head and spare it this indignity they would do so. For instance, Benkei, the Japanese Friar Tuck, performed this office for a friend during the flight of Yoshitsune from Yoritomo's jealous vengeance. He and Shomonbo, a Minamoto leader, had covered the escape of their chief, but the seekers of blood were upon them. Shomonbo, therefore, sitting in the correct attitude on a mat, thrust his dirk into his bowels. As he fell forward Benkei, who was standing to his left and a little to the rear, smote off his head with a single stroke. Picking up the head, he fled with it, and, being possessed of incredible strength and agility, he eluded his pursuers, reached a Buddhist temple, and gave the head into the safe keeping of the priests for honourable burial.

This is a story which, whether literally true or not, is important. For one thing, it illustrates the Japanese passion for doing everything decently and in order, which, though often extremely tedious, is one of their finer characteristics. Here we find that, though *harakiri* was a comparatively new custom, there was already a proper way of performing it, kneeling upon a mat. It had already been found, too, that a compromise must be made with ideals. Ordinary men could not carve themselves up so elaborately as did Tadanobu (who was said in some versions to have thrown a handful of his own guts at his enemies), much less cut off their own heads

THE JAPANESE AS HEAD-HUNTERS

afterwards; so it became the customary thing to thrust in the dirk, often perfunctorily, and a friend standing by performed the decapitation, which was the really important part of the ceremony.

Unless there was some reason for torture, captives would generally be simply executed by the headsman and their heads exposed like those of criminals, as a warning to those who fight an enemy too strong for them. Kumai, another of Yoshitsune's followers, about to suffer the penalty of capture, delayed the affair so long by raising one objection after another regarding the etiquette of the proceedings that a rescue party was in time to deliver him with his head still on his shoulders.

Another warrior was less fortunate: "And as he spoke those words [a Buddhist prayer] he stretched out his neck and the blow fell. . . . His head was then nailed up over the gate of the Hannyaji; and this was done because it was here that he stood during the battle in the period Jisho when the temples were burned. When his wife heard what had been done, 'If they have cut off his head,' she said, 'they will have thrown his body away somewhere; so go and bring it, that the sutras may be recited over it.' And she sent a litter for it."* She was allowed to have the head in time for all to be cremated together. One does what one can, even if the head is gone.

Besides doing things decently and in order—having a special box for carrying the head even when it is to be exhibited as a trophy, for instance—there is clearly something religious about head-hunting, and this develops as time goes on. We have seen how Benkei found sanctuary for his friend's head in a Buddhist temple. There is a curious passage in the *Heike Monogatari*, which, in Professor Sadler's translation, reads:

* *Heike Monogatari*, trans. A. L. Sadler, ii, p. 278.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Thinking to make him the first sacrifice to the god of battles that day, Hatakeyama rode up alongside him and grappled, pulling him from his horse and squeezing him against the pommel of his saddle, where he twisted his head and cut it off without more ado, passing it over to Honda-no-Jiro, who fastened it to the left side of his saddle.

Professor Kato Genchi, in *A Study of Shinto* (Tokyo, 1926), gives Sadler's translation as authority, with page number, but uses his own words:

The warrior Hatakeyama hung at his saddle the head of an enemy, whom he had killed on the field of battle, in order to make a first sacrifice of it to the God of War.

English readers would probably read "sacrifice to the god of battles" as though it were an allusive phrase like "the captives of our bow and spear" such as we use all too commonly in English. Kato emphasises that it is meant literally in the Japanese, yet, having done so, he goes on to discuss whether the Japanese War God was actually worshipped in camps with human sacrifices. He rather suspects that this is a copy of some Chinese heroics, introduced to give dignity to the narrative.

Though the Japanese are polytheistic and warlike, they have no particular predilection for worshipping the God of War.* Indeed, their ideas regarding this deity are rather confused. Some critics say that Hachiman was a great Buddhist saint and therefore figures inexplicably as a God of War; but more generally it is the Emperor Ojin, son of the Empress Jingo, who is regarded as having been deified under the name of Hachiman, though he was merely the son of a warlike mother and never went to war himself; but in either

* Though the case was somewhat different, the reader will remember that the Greeks were helped or hindered in battle by other gods than Ares.

THE JAPANESE AS HEAD-HUNTERS

case he is not so prominent an object of worship as might be expected with a people so devoted to war as the Japanese.* In polytheistic countries it seems to be certain temples and shrines rather than certain gods which attract devotion. It was rather fortunate that the pretty idea of making a head the votive offering at the Hachiman shrine did not become popular, for if it had, all the shrines in Japan could not contain the heads which would be offered.

There is, however, a very distinct "offering" ceremony. When a vendetta has been accomplished it is usual to offer the newly severed head on the tomb of its owner's deceased enemy. Old Kiyomori, head of the Taira clan, gave one of the earliest of clear-cut expressions of this idea, when, on his deathbed in 1181, he said, "My only regret is that I am dying without having seen the head of Yoritomo of the Minamoto. When I am dead, do not perform any Buddhist services or make offerings for me, or build temples or pagodas. Only make haste and slay Yoritomo and cut off his head and lay it before my tomb. That will be the best offering you can make me either in this world or the next." The pious

* On occasion, however, he plays a conspicuous part in Japan's early history. "In the opening year of the Empress Koken's reign," says Sir George Sansom, "the god Hachiman, a Shinto deity of extremely uncertain origin, whose shrine was at Usa, in Western Japan, had declared his wish to proceed from Usa to the Capital. A retinue of high officials was sent to escort him, and a guard of soldiers to clear the road. Upon his arrival—by which is to be understood the arrival of a sacred car containing the symbol of his presence—he was installed in a specially constructed shrine in one of the palaces, where forty Buddhist priests recited masses for seven days. Then a priestess of his shrine, who it should be remembered was at the same time a Buddhist nun, worshipped in the Todaiji, and on the occasion, the abdicated Emperor Shomu, the Empress Koken, and all the Court were present. Five thousand monks prayed and recited from the sutras, dances were performed, and a cap of the first grade was conferred upon the god. One can hardly imagine a more perfect display of the spirit of compromise than a religious ceremony for the bestowal of civil rank upon one deity at the shrine of another."

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Buddhist chronicler mourns over a spirit so recalcitrant, but we could wish that he had been a little more explicit on the ritual proper to the occasion when offering bloody heads at tombs.

Heads fall without ceasing during the civil wars. The youthful Yoshitsune, bidden, like the head-hunter of the magazine writers, to bring a head if he would win a fair maiden, dumps three, in sheer exuberance, on the table in front of her astonished father—a work of supererogation, since he had already seduced the girl. In due course, as we have seen, he lost his own head. They who take the sword . . .

At the time when Edward the First was conquering Wales—no very gentle period in any part of the world—Kublai Khan undertook the much larger task of conquering Japan. The Mongol Emperor sent a party of six envoys to offer terms to Japan; there had been twelve hundred years of diplomatic intercourse, but its amenities were so undeveloped that the Japanese cut off the heads of the Chinese envoys and exhibited them as trophies to the patriotic citizens of Kamakura. The invasion that followed failed miserably, all chance of success being destroyed by a storm which scattered the armada. History failed to avenge the murder of the envoys.

Yet in ordinary circumstances heads fall only by ones and twos, and as warfare becomes more savage with the savagery that it feeds upon, mass *harakiri*, sometimes without decapitation, attracts the special admiration of the multitude. Particularly as the drama developed, popular attention was directed more to belly-cutting than to decapitation. To cut off a head on the stage, except in the puppet-show, is impracticable, and has little dramatic possibility; but a Japanese audience loves a good belly-cutting above all things. The

actor squirms, gasps, grimaces, and utters heroic sentiments for an hour on end, and is watched with breathless adoration for every minute of it.

But the dramatists did what they could with decapitation; and in some cases it acquired a specially heroic quality from the fact that a loyal retainer who more or less resembled his master would sometimes be expected to give his own head in substitution for the master's. In a little booklet on the *Kabuki Drama* published for the benefit of tourists by the Imperial Government Railways, we read:

Migawari is a feature of the Kabuki play of puppet-show origin. It means an act of sacrifice in time of danger made for the master by a loyal retainer who bears a resemblance to him in person and age. *Kubijikken*, or inspection of the detached head, is the way in which such a fraud is discovered. The head is brought on to the stage in a wooden vessel, and the inspection is conducted by one who can tell whether the head belonged to the right man. In feudal Japan war was the order of the day and sacrifice in the form above specified was often called for. The institution of *kubijikken* was born as a counter-measure. The identification of a bloody head placed on a stand and a group of men in breathless attention is not a scene calculated to give artistic pleasure to the audience, but the hand of Kabuki art has succeeded in giving a light touch to it so as to soften and beautify a sight otherwise grotesque. . . . *Kubijikken* invariably accentuates the climax of a play. It is valuable for the student of Japanese culture as it gives a glimpse into the inner life of the Japanese samurai of yore.

But the dramas were not, of course, written for the benefit of foreign tourists, and the gestures and attitudes are meant to emphasise rather than disguise the bloodiness of the business.

War became more savage as history progressed, and treachery was so rife that it was foolish to show mercy. When the last of the Hojo Regents, Takatoki, had fought his last battle, in 1333, he and eight hundred and seventy-seven

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

of his followers committed *harakiri*. One would have supposed that such a number would have continued to fight on; but there was the danger of falling alive into the hands of the enemy, and the belly-cutting, though painful, was better than that. "The Hojo had defended themselves to the last, disputing every step of the way through the streets of their capital, but the city was taken, committed to the flames, and destroyed. No mercy was shown. Men, women, and children all alike were pitilessly slaughtered, and the Hojo and their adherents exterminated as ruthlessly as were the Taira a hundred and forty-eight years previously."*

As an example of the doings of the Ashikaga Shoguns may be cited the sixth of the line, Yoshinori, who exterminated most of his kinsmen. Some, with their followers, had allowed themselves to be captured, on the understanding that the two children of the house, aged eleven and nine, should be allowed to become monks. But Yoshinori had been a monk himself and knew they were not to be trusted. The procession of the prisoners was accompanied by thirty head-boxes, and a body of troops from the Shogun met them and executed the will of Yoshinori. The two Ashikaga children had their heads lopped off with the rest, and sent to their treacherous relative. His own brother's head was also among the trophies for identification, and had been so savaged that it was only recognised by the teeth. The Shogun was not well acquainted with his young kinsmen and summoned their nurse to identify them. "To every question she was silent. Stolid, without word or movement, she sat before the stands on which were placed the heads. Finally, in anger, Yoshinori ordered that her tongue be torn out. This was done forthwith; and she died."† It only remains

* Longford, *Japan*, p. 97.

† De Benneville, *Oguri Hangwan Ichidaiki*, p. 456.

THE JAPANESE AS HEAD-HUNTERS

to add that a couple of months afterwards, Yoshinori was giving a drinking party to celebrate this great victory, when the horses, getting loose in the courtyard, caused a disturbance. Everybody rushed to see what the noise was, and two of the Shogun's enemies, taking advantage of the confusion, seized him and cut off his head. The year was 1441.

So the heads continue to fall, until we come to Hideyoshi and Ieyasu, regarded by many commentators, both Japanese and foreign, as Japan's two greatest men. Hideyoshi, indeed, appears to have had Napoleonic abilities as a soldier, and Ieyasu contrived a form of civil government under which he and his successors kept the peace for two and a half centuries; but they were both great headsmen, and the European scholars who echo the Japanese praises of these heroes are fain to discover as an excuse for their encomiums some occasions when they might have exercised their customary cruelty, but for some whim refrained.

Hideyoshi, suspecting a nephew whom he had made Regent of a desire to retain power for himself, to the exclusion of Hideyoshi's infant son, saw to it that the nephew, his immediate friends, his three little children, and thirty-one ladies of his household were all beheaded. This was atrocious, indeed, but was hardly in the grand manner that we look for in Hideyoshi. It must have been a nobler spectacle when his men fell upon four thousand militant monks and beheaded them to the last man. His triumph of headsmanship (though disqualified for geographical reasons) was in 1598, when 38,700 Korean heads were lopped off. Unfortunately transportation for these was inadequate; and just as a head served the purpose of a whole corpse in testifying to the death of an enemy, so on this occasion two ears and a nose had to depute for a head. Seventy-seven thousand four hundred ears and thirty-eight thousand seven

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

hundred noses were taken to Japan, packed in barrels, and buried in Kyoto, the Ear Mound (*mimidzuka*) being proudly shown to tourists to this day.

Ieyasu, the great Tokugawa Shogun, was a worthy disciple of Hideyoshi, to whom he owed everything. He took an oath to promote the fortunes of Hideyoshi's son, made it his business after his patron's death to quarrel with him, defeated him in battle, and then had his head. The ill-fated Hideyori left a little son of eight, and Ieyasu had the child hunted down and beheaded—though his mother was Ieyasu's own granddaughter! But that was nothing to Ieyasu, who had, years before, put his own eldest son to death, and was strongly suspected of having poisoned his third son for too loyal an attachment to Hideyoshi.

But before Ieyasu established his famous peace, he had a "war to end war." It was prosecuted without mercy, and in the final clearing up, the number "put summarily out of the way must have been great, for the missionaries describe the heads as being stuck on planks between Kyoto and Fushimi, and say that there were eighteen rows, some with as many as a thousand heads."*

Thus before the peace, we have a head-hunting far exceeding the most famous examples of massed belly-cutting. Ieyasu was a man of very constant mind. He entered upon his Shogunate glutted with blood, but did not think, because of this, that a people so bloodthirsty, though war-weary at the moment, would be content to remain henceforth without some outlet for their homicidal proclivities. So opportunities were provided. The Tokugawas were students of

* A. L. Sadler, *The Maker of Modern Japan: The Life of Tokugawa Ieyasu*, p. 293. In respect of perfidy and ruthlessness, at least, modern Japan may be regarded as following Ieyasu's example, even though we may doubt whether it was "made" by him.

THE JAPANESE AS HEAD-HUNTERS

Confucius, and agreed with the dictum that one cannot live under the canopy of heaven with a man who has injured one's father. Accordingly a personal vendetta was permitted on formal notice being given, and provided it did not lead to rioting. An informal vengeance was permissible in some circumstances. For instance, the husband of an unfaithful wife might kill both her and her lover, but not one singly, and he had only to notify the authorities of what he had done.

It was probably this period of enforced peace which gave *harakiri* its special prestige, and made it the very ceremonious thing that it became. We cannot, of course, be quite sure that the story of Benkei beheading his friend was not a later addition to the facts; even Benkei himself is not much more reliably documented than Friar Tuck. It has been said of the Hindus that their every act has a religious significance; and of the Japanese it might be similarly said that every act is a ceremony, or tends to become one. So, in the Tokugawa period, when there was no more occasion to commit suicide on the field of battle, but a not infrequent command to do so in atonement for some offence, we find the *harakiri* greatly elaborated.

There is a detailed discourse on *harakiri*, translated by Lord Redesdale in the *Tales of Old Japan*, from which it would appear that condemnation to commit suicide by belly-cutting was instituted during the Ashikaga Shogunate, though as this lasted from 1333 to 1568, the date remains rather vague, and it was evidently not much more than allowing the prisoner who had been unable to kill himself on the field of battle to do so after capture. The Japanese writer says:

At that time the country was in a state of utter confusion; and there were men who, although fighting, were neither guilty of high treason nor of infidelity to their feudal lords, but who by the chances of war were taken prisoners. To drag out such men as these, bound as criminals, and cut their heads off, was intolerably cruel; accordingly,

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

men hit upon a ceremonious mode of suicide by disembowelling, in order to comfort the departed spirit. Even at present, when it becomes necessary to put to death a man who has been guilty of some act unworthy of a Samurai, at the time of the execution witnesses are sent to the house; and the criminal, having bathed and put on new clothes, in obedience to the commands of his superiors, puts an end to himself, but does not on that account forfeit his rank as a Samurai. This is a law for which, in all truth, men should be grateful.

Merciless massacre was still the rule, as it had been in the Gempei wars,* when Taira and Minamoto sought to exterminate one another. Perhaps the custom of allowing a samurai to kill himself may be regarded as a rudimentary chivalry, though the conventional phrase about "comforting the departed spirit" merely means avoiding the danger that results from a man dying with bitter anger in his heart. Lafcadio Hearn's story *Diplomacy* tells of the precautions taken by a daimyo to divert the mind of a man who hated him, so that he might be thinking of something else at the moment of decapitation and the angry spirit thus frustrated.

About 1680, according to the authority already quoted, it became the custom for the principal in a *harakiri* to make only a perfunctory cut in his belly, whereupon his friend the second, or *kaishaku*, cut off his head at a blow. This helped, of course, to alleviate the suppressed blood lust. Hacking the corpses of dead criminals was little fun, and a law had to be passed against gentlemen trying their swords on the commonalty—a privilege apt to be abused when there was no fighting to be done. A *harakiri* by order, in expiation of an offence, became a very ceremonious occasion, and the behaviour of all concerned was watched with the greatest attention. If the principal hesitated or lost his head, the

* It is still the Japanese rule in China at the time of writing—1938.

THE JAPANESE AS HEAD-HUNTERS

seconds, though they were his friends, had to seize him, throw him down, and stab him to death, and the leading second in any case had to cut off the head. Every sumurai was supposed to be able to sweep off the head with one blow, and there was a theory that the perfect decapitation consisted in not quite severing the head, because that was rather like a common execution, but in leaving a little still to be cut, so that the *kaishaku* could hold the topknot and finish the severance without allowing the head to fall to the mats. There were also details about ensuring the proper falling of the body, which, in spite of all precautions, sometimes had to be assisted in a decorous collapse. They were connoisseurs in the art of decapitation, not merely in belly-cutting.

But life was rather slow, and there were fears that the martial spirit was wilting through the canker of a calm world and a long peace, when there happened that which reassured the pessimists and thrilled everybody with a fearful joy. The Imperial Family at the beginning of the eighteenth century lived in the Kyoto palace in impotence and poverty; but from time to time messages passed between the Emperor in Kyoto and the Shogun in Yedo, and on these occasions the lack of loyalty was concealed by the elaborateness of the courtesies. Asano, the daimyo of Ako, was appointed to receive the imperial messenger on one of these occasions, and it was the duty of Kira Kotsuke-no-Suke to instruct him in the etiquette; but Asano neglected to make his instructor a handsome present of money, so Kira insulted him so grossly that he attacked the old wretch.* As this happened in the Shogun's palace, Asano had to commit *harakiri*, his goods and fief were confiscated, and his retainers dispersed. Forty-seven of these devoted themselves to vengeance. After

* There is an old version of the story according to which the quarrel between the two noblemen was over the possession of a catamite.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

nearly two years, when the vigilance of Kira had flagged, they broke into his house when there were few retainers present, and when these had been killed or had fled, they dragged the ancient Kira from his hiding-place and dispatched him. In the celebrated drama *Chiushingura*, founded on this incident, Oishi, the leader of the Forty-seven, says:

We, though we are but retainers, have broken into my lord's mansion and created a disturbance, because we desired to avenge our lord's death, and we beg you to pardon our want of manners. You will now bravely give us your head.

This, in the indirect Japanese manner, means, "Now commit *harakiri*, and we will take your head"; and doubtless had Kira consented, they would have escaped punishment. But Kira, instead, made a slash at Oishi with his sword, but was foiled. The recitative in the play then reads:

Oishi gives the first blow with his sword; and his forty and more comrades shout and rejoice as might the blind tortoise when it falls in with a floating log or as if they had seen the flower of the *udonge* which blooms but once in three thousand years; they leap and dance in the fulness of their joy. The head is cut off with the dirk that their lord left behind. They rejoice and dance, for it was to see this one head that they forsook their wives, parted from their children, and lost their parents. What an auspicious day is to-day! They beat the head and bite at it; they all weep with joy. It is too natural and becomes saddening to see. Oishi takes out of his bosom his dead lord's tablet and places it on a table in the alcove; he washes the head of its bloodstains and offers it before the tablet; and then he burns incense which he has brought in his helmet. He shuffles back and bows three times, nay, nine times, to the tablet.*

* *Chiushingura*, trans. J. Inouye. As the laws of the time prohibited all reference to contemporary affairs, the authors of the play put it back three and a half centuries into Ashikaga times and changed the names, combining the story with a Montague and Capulet feud of those days. I have therefore altered the name Yuranosuke, in the play, to the actual name, Oishi.

THE JAPANESE AS HEAD-HUNTERS

This is the most popular of all Japanese plays, and the auspicious days of the new year are always ushered in with it. Besides the murder of Kira, it includes two *harakiri* which, to those not born in the tradition, are disgusting and infinitely wearisome. Dramatic necessity detracts from the final scene by telescoping it. Actually the Forty-seven, when they had done "biting at the head," took it to the Sengakuji Temple in Yedo, where they washed it at the well, and laid it on the tomb of Asano. After they had all expiated their crime by *harakiri* (apparently without decapitation) they were buried around Asano's grave, and the place is one of pious pilgrimage.

To see the most made of the head-hunting one must see the play as presented at the Puppet Theatre at Osaka. There the decapitation is done in style, the head, flourished by the ecstatic Oishi, being adorned with several vertebræ.*

Lord Redesdale relates how he was deputed to witness the execution of Taki Zenzaburo, a samurai who gave orders to fire on the foreigners in the newly established settlement at Kobe in 1868 and was condemned to death. The affair took place in a Buddhist temple, for which there were many precedents—not because a temple is a proper place for scenes of blood, but because the priests perform the last pious rites for the dead. Taki, who during the present decade has been exalted to the position of a patriotic hero, and for whose fate there was always a sympathetic admiration, did not shirk his part in the ceremony. He cut well and truly, and his friend whipped off his head with complete efficiency.

We must make a last reference to Lord Redesdale in this

* Alas! since this was written, a Japanese paper has stated that the management of the Puppet Theatre had decided not to give the complete play any more, as it is too long. The two *harakiri* are in the first part.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

connection. In the *Tales* he gives a picture of the execution ground at Tokyo, with a head lying exposed on a sort of high bench. The writer at a Japanese theatre once saw a play concerned with the adventures of a Japanese aviator in Formosa, and in one of the scenes there was a Formosan hut, with a similar shelf outside it, bearing three heads! Such exhibitions are, of course, not permitted now; the heads have even been obliterated from the picture-postcards; and it is sixty-one years since heads were exposed in Japan.* But the similarity between the Japanese and Formosan head-shelves was striking.

Nor is the idea of head-hunting dead yet. At the time of the Satsuma rebellion in 1877, Saigo Takamori, the military leader of the rebels, committed *harakiri* when he saw that his cause was irretrievably lost. His old friend Prince Yamagata, who had led the Government troops against him, was a student of the modern German strategists, but, like his opponent, ended his part in the affair in accordance with historic precedent. He cut off Saigo's head, washed it in the approved manner, and presumably left it with the priests after the proper ceremonies had been performed. Yamagata was the most prominent of the Elder Statesmen, and was the ruler of Japan until his death in 1922.

In making the above statement we have followed a Japanese biographer of Yamagata, who credits his hero with the decapitation. Professor E. W. Clement says that it was done, as the essential part of the *harakiri*, by Hemmi, one of the insurgent chief's followers, who gave the head to a servant to carry away. He lost it in his own flight, and it was picked up by a coolie and brought in, just in time for the funeral. A. H. Mounsey, in *The Satsuma Rebellion*, says, "It was

* A number were exhibited after the various rebellions in the first decade of Meiji, 1868-1877.

THE JAPANESE AS HEAD-HUNTERS

disfigured and ghastly, clotted with blood and earth. Admiral Kawamura, the senior officer present, reverently washed the head with his own hands, as a mark of respect for his former friend and companion in arms during the war of the Restoration." The really important fact, about which there is no dispute, is that belly-cutting and head-severing were duly performed. Otherwise it is doubtful whether the heroic statue of "The Great Saigo" would have been erected near the Palace in Tokyo.

We find the head-hunting idea dominantly surviving even to-day. In Mr. Omura Bunji's biography of Prince Saionji,* the last surviving Elder Statesman, we find the Prince explaining to one of his mistresses the reason why Countess Nogi packed bottles of perfume with her husband's and sons' effects when they went to the front: "Being a warrior's wife, who does not expect him to return, before her husband's departure the woman perfumes his martial attire, particularly the helmet, with good incense. When he dies on the field, and his head is taken away by the enemy, it will not emanate a bad smell because of the scented helmet."

And again, on that night in February 1936, when an anonymous telephone call came to Saionji, advising him to flee because thirty officers and men were on their way in motor-cars to his seaside villa to assassinate him, he said: "Let them sever my grey head from its shadowy frame, should one more murder reawake the true spirit of national unity and insure the safety of his Majesty!"

At the time of this writing his venerable head is still on its shoulders. But it is remarkable that in such a crisis the "Man who Westernised Japan" should think in terms of

* *The Last Genro: Prince Saionji, the Man who Westernised Japan.* By Omura Bunji. J. B. Lippincott Co., 1938.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

head-hunting—or that an extremely Westernised biographer should do so for him.

* * * * *

Since the above was written, it has become only too clear that in their war with China the Japanese have reverted to their mediæval savagery, while not abandoning modern science! Photographs have been taken from Japanese soldiers showing the decapitation of prisoners, and the Chinese have reported “mass beheadings.” Hardly any Chinese prisoners are taken. They are massacred, and, if there is time, they are beheaded. So the heroic spirit is kept alive. *Harakiri*, however, has undergone a change, and is no longer belly-cutting. Colonel Aizawa and the seventeen officers who paid the price of failure in the rebellion of February 26, 1938, are believed to have been given the privilege of shooting themselves. This privilege was certainly given to Major Kouga, in 1932, in the fighting near Shanghai, when his men ran away and left him wounded and helpless. The Chinese treated him kindly in hospital, and sent him back when he was convalescent. His own people were less merciful. They sent him to the place where he had been captured, with orders to shoot himself, which he did. The pistol at the head has taken the place of the dirk in the belly. If officers could be captured, and, after civilised treatment by the Chinese, were allowed to resume their duties, there would be a demand for the civilised treatment of Chinese prisoners, and that would never do: it would sap the heroic spirit of Japan. School books, romances, the theatre and the cinematograph all combine to keep up the spirit of ferocity, which finds its most satisfying expression in the lopping off of heads.

The cult of the severed head makes a large contribution

THE JAPANESE AS HEAD-HUNTERS

to *Yamato Damashii*, the Spirit of Japan, yet may be regarded as social rather than religious, though it has aspects that verge on the religious. Like its related rite *Harakiri*, but much more so, it receives mention in literature which has required an almost sacred character, but in so far as it has no literature of its own it must be accounted inferior to Shinto, especially as it is equally lacking in any ethical value. It is but the barest conjecture that the cult was carried far and wide by adventurous Japanese, yet in its most distant manifestation we find that the head-hunters of the Naga Hills, in Assam, are a people of small stature, whose attitude towards their women much resembles the Japanese, and who blacken their teeth—a custom mentioned in the oldest Japanese literature, and still common within living memory. We may reasonably suppose that the cult is in no small degree responsible for the Japanese passion for bloodshed, and for the worship of the sword, which Ieyasu described as the soul of the samurai. Obviously it does not contribute anything of value to civilisation, though Japan's leading soldiers to-day seem to be of opinion that it has a military value; so at this point we leave it, and revert to those matters more truly religious in that they have engaged the thoughts of the Japanese concerning their origin and destiny.

CHAPTER IV

“SUBJECTS EVER UNITED IN LOYALTY” *



IN the reign in which the *Kojiki* was completed, that of the Empress Gemmyo (707-715), the capital was moved to Nara. Hitherto it had been the custom to build a new palace after each Emperor's death, as death was a pollution even to gods. Such a custom is plainly a sign of the recent abandonment of a nomadic or at least a very primitive culture, and is inconsistent with any real advance in civilisation. But by this time everything was being done to make Japan a miniature of China. Even the Nara Palace, though built for that permanence the possibility of which so much of the Buddhistic literature is devoted to denying, must have been a very simple affair, probably entirely of wood, and, after all, it was not very permanent. The Empress and her daughter who succeeded her as Empress Gensho, were devout Buddhists and said to be much under the influence of priests.

Whether at this period the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* found many readers may be doubted, but they are supposed to have had from the beginning enough authority for their purpose, which was to procure the acceptance of a manifest fable.

* Imperial Rescript on Education.

“SUBJECTS EVER UNITED IN LOYALTY”

Certain heirlooms—a sword, a mirror, and a jewel—had become associated with the Imperial House as its regalia. By the pretence that the sword was presented to his sister the Sun Goddess by Susa-no-o, the Storm God, who found it in the dragon's tail, and that the Sun Goddess gave it, along with the mirror and jewel, to Ninigi-no-Mikoto, who, as we have seen, was probably the Chinese Su Fu (if he can be said to have been anybody at all), the regalia became the symbols of sovereignty over all the tribes who could be subdued, though their spurious nature was obvious. Their magical effect was only limited. Seizing them did not enable their possessor automatically to become Emperor, but the Emperor had to have them. Hence, whenever they were stolen or lost, the necessity arose of making new ones, and as the three precious objects were normally kept carefully wrapped up, so that nobody has ever seen them, this presented no difficulty. Indeed, the wrappers may to-day be quite empty for all anybody knows to the contrary. But their possession certifies the authenticity of the Line Unbroken from Ages Eternal.

In the time of these devout Empresses, however, little attention was paid to these relics of barbarism. The Empresses learnt what they could of the Way of Buddha, as it had filtered down to them through various media, and they neglected the almost meaningless incantations by which the favour of the gods was invoked. Epidemics, once a sufficient reason for abjuring Buddhism and casting the images into the sea, now stimulated the piety of those who followed the Merciful One. Pagodas, temples, and monasteries were erected. And as Buddhism denied nothing, even when it explained it away as illusion, Gyogi Bosatsu, an able and devout priest who rose to great power under the Emperor Shomu (724–748), created, with the help of his imperial master,

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Ryobu Shinto, a system under which Buddhism found in its ample fold room for all the Shinto gods, which it was easy enough to identify with Indian avatars, especially as a name was sufficient and qualities mattered very little. The idea met with no opposition, though it was not until the twelfth century that it was really systematised, but it became so firmly established that it endured in spite of the Shinto Revival, until 1868, when, for political purposes, a real divorce was effected.

The Nara period was one in which Buddhism made great progress. Its doctrines found no great philosophic capacity in which to develop; but its artistic expression seemed to liberate an æsthetic sense which is the most valuable characteristic of the Japanese, and which hitherto, for want of adequate inspiration, had never found expression. The casting of the great bronze Buddha at Nara was undertaken in this period—a remarkable piece of work for any age to accomplish, though unhappily in the effort to achieve enormous size, the more important element of beauty suffered. But the less ambitious works of the Nara period include some of the finest examples of Japanese religious art that have ever been achieved.

There were rebellions in the north and in the south, but these did not seem to disturb the Palace circle in the least, though the armies whose task it was, year after year, to preserve the frontier and push it ever a little further were destined at last to shed more blood of their own kin than ever they had of the simpler tribes whom they displaced.

Culture must have been a heavy burden on the laborious community who had to pay for it all. Though life in the Palace was on a scale that to-day would be thought simple, the building of great temples, the casting of images, and the performance of elaborate and ornate rituals could run away

“SUBJECTS EVER UNITED IN LOYALTY”

with a great deal of money, and the new civilisation impoverished the countryside. A succession of wayward Empresses with priestly advisers or lovers, one at least of whom tried to seize the throne for himself, created an impression that perhaps male occupants of the throne would be preferable. Though each sovereign had a good deal of influence in the choice of a successor, the family and the immediate courtiers had more, and they overruled the Emperor Konin, who desired to nominate a daughter to follow him. They also had a good deal to say as regards the titles of the imperial consorts, but though elevated birth was thought necessary to qualify for the title of Empress, rank was not needed as a qualification for mothering an Emperor.

The result of overruling Konin was excellent, his son Yamabe, who succeeded him and took the name Kwammu (781-806), proving to be a very able sovereign. He gave up the capital at Nara, and established one at Kyoto, which has remained the imperial city to this day, though since 1868 it has only been the place for enthronement. Kwammu fled from the too numerous temples and priests of Nara in A.D. 783, and the Kyoto that Meiji deserted in 1868 for Tokyo was left for a not altogether dissimilar reason. It is the delight of the tourist but had some grave disadvantages as a modern capital.

The ancient Polynesian tradition of the divine descent of the Emperor was probably not strong enough in itself to have held good against the adverse chances and changes of life, but it so increased in importance during a period of growing culture that it became very firmly established. To the Polynesian tradition—possibly a residue of the “dual organisation” which Mr. W. J. Perry brilliantly expounds, and which we see in its simplest form in Miss Rose Macaulay’s *Orphan Island*—was added the greater conception of the

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Chinese Emperors who claimed the Mandate of Heaven. The imperial line, "coeval with heaven and earth," had some narrow escapes. In early days more than one attempt was made to supplant it, and it is remarkable that, though there is certainly nothing revolutionary about Buddhism, these attempts were made by Soga-no-Yemishi (see p. 37), who played his part in introducing Buddhism, in the seventh century, and by Dokyo, a Buddhist priest, in the eighth. There was always a danger that a profound philosophy, like Buddhism, might find the pretensions of the Imperial Family absurd, and that it never actually did so may be an indication that on its philosophic side there was little profundity in Japanese Buddhism; it is certainly significant that Nichiren, the least intellectual form of Buddhism, is also the most patriotic.

Not that Dokyo's ambitions had anything to do with intellectual doubt. He was the lover of the Empress Shotoku, whom he told that it had been revealed by the god of the Hachiman shrine that he was to be Emperor. But the Empress was not so besotted as to take his unsupported word for it, and the loyal subject whom she sent to get confirmation came back with the message from the War God that since the foundation of the Empire the State had never been ruled by a subject. Dokyo's attempt was in A.D. 769.

Much later there was a third Buddhist attempt on the Throne, and this time by the Monto (or Pure Jodo) sect, who, by a single devotion to Amida, reduced religion to its simplest form, and by abjuring all austerities purged it of disagreeable obligations. As if to compensate for these attractive features, the sectarians became very militant and played no small part in civil strife. About 1529, when Monto was riding on the crest of prosperity, it plotted to put Shonyo Shonin, Lord Abbot of the Hongwanji, on the throne, and

“SUBJECTS EVER UNITED IN LOYALTY”

to make his military commander, Shimotsuma, a new Shogun. The entire failure of this plan suggests that the Japanese system has some elements of strength if only in its making usurpation specially difficult.

From its earliest introduction, however, Buddhism enjoyed such munificent favours at the hands of the Imperial House that only in moments of aberration could it have wished for any change, and the Fujiwara family, who succeeded the Soga as providers to the Imperial couch and civil administrators, were content with the reality of power which these offices conferred on them. The less that was seen of the Emperor the more sacred he became, and the smaller was the risk of anybody trying to supplant him; and the longer the legend endured that the Emperor came first and the country afterwards, the more impossible it became for any other polity to arise.

The insular position of Japan was, of course, a large factor in this historic development. The islands having once been organised as one kingdom, even a usurper would never rest content without being ruler of the whole. Japan was just too far from the mainland to be in any danger of intrigues such as kept England and France at war for centuries; so, the conception of Japan as a single entity, having once been formed, endured. In practice it might be, and generally was, a congeries of warring chieftains, but only for a brief period was it a divided Empire. The Fujiwaras were prolific, and sufficient lines of the Imperial House came into existence to remove any danger of extinction. To be too prolific is, of course, almost as bad as not being prolific enough, and the Emperor Saga (809–823) found his large family terribly expensive. He had thirty-eight sons and twelve daughters, and though the Palace had been removed from the impoverished region of Nara to Kyoto, it was difficult to

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

maintain the brood in imperial style; so the seventh and subsequent sons were degraded to the rank of subjects, with the name of Minamoto. They were destined to play a great part in Japanese history; but, speaking generally, the fashion thus set up of "starting new families" with younger sons as their heads only increased the number of impoverished aristocrats who hung parasitically round the Court in the long days of its poverty.

In that extraordinary romance *The Tale of Genji*, which was translated very beautifully by Mr. Waley,* we read of there being factions in the Court, on the Emperor's side and against him. It is true, the *Genji Monogatari* is a work of fiction, but if there were any lively sense of imperial divinity, as imperial divinity is now understood, such a state of affairs could not find place even in a romance. If a Court Lady of to-day wrote in such a strain she would be fortunate if she escaped with confinement in a lunatic asylum for the rest of her days. Murasaki Shikibu's contemporary, Sei Shonagon, who wrote fact rather than fiction, gives a strange picture of a timid, effeminate emperor who was greatly shocked when a palace cat, chased by a dog, ran to him for refuge. Yet there is no reason to suppose that, except for the greater degree of makebelieve now in vogue, the daily life of divinity has experienced any essential change.

It was a strange life that these ladies describe—luxurious in a simple manner, smelling incense, writing poetry, and making love with copious sentimental tears but little jealousy, and more regard for propriety than one could suppose would go with so little moral sense. But those were happy days, when an Emperor was still somewhat, however effeminate and surrounded by petty intrigue he might be. The practice

* *The Tale of Genji* (with five subsequent volumes under different titles), by Lady Murasaki. Translated by Arthur Waley. George Allen & Unwin.

“SUBJECTS EVER UNITED IN LOYALTY”

was already common of forcing an Emperor to abdicate, and appointing a son or other successor in his place—often a mere child and of collateral descent as distant as was convenient. We know little of the life of the people—they worked hard then, as now, for a bare subsistence, most of their labour going to the support of their betters. Murasaki Shikibu mentions seeing them at close quarters—“strange gnarled creatures” she calls them.

It is strange that the two and a half centuries of the Heian period, a golden age when peace reigned, were only a preparation for a period of warfare, a time when the seeds were sown of that militarism which has been the curse of Japan ever since, just as the two and a half centuries of peace under the Tokugawa Shoguns were a period when that militarism which has now become a world menace was incubating. Not that there was any close parallel between the periods: they were, on the contrary, very different. In earlier days there had been on occasion a general call to arms which some historians represent as conscription, so as to justify the modern pseudo-Prussian style as really Japanese.* In the Heian period the warriors were so long out on their campaign that they became a soldier caste rather than a popular levy. Peace reigned in the capital and for a long way round it; but in the north the Ainu were fighting their losing battle against the invaders, and in the south the Kumaso and other warlike tribes were being brought under the Yamato banner. The work of Jimmu Tenno in 660 B.C. had been imperfect indeed, for it was not really finished till seventeen hundred years later.

In the later centuries, however, the soldiers were not villagers fighting for their homes, but a frontier army

* This is notably the case in the Imperial Rescript to the Army and Navy quoted in pp. 213-217.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

extending the Japanese dominion; and so, when there was nothing left to conquer except a land so bleak as to have no attractions, they came home again, and peace and plenty, elegance and effeminacy, love-making and languishing, found that the world was not made for them alone: there were soldiers in the capital, and they were soon ill content to be left idle and to be regarded as barbarians by the Court exquisites.

In the halcyon days of the Heian epoch Japan seems to have enjoyed the best things in Chinese civilisation with an elegance added by her own awakened æsthetic sense. But where she differed most profoundly from China she continued to differ, though she had forgotten the difference for a period. After China became a united Empire the repute of the soldier declined, and for the civil administration there was the famous examination system. In Japan the military caste seized the power and the examination system was never introduced. Those who take the sword may perish by the sword, but they would find extinction much sooner on the field of competitive mental exercise. In the earlier mediæval days the military chieftains were as illiterate as our own Anglo-Norman barons, and while they professed contempt for the Kyoto nobility they also stood in awe of the masters of elegant accomplishments, who could compose Chinese poetry, or what passed for it in Japan.

For some time the military men were fairly content with provincial posts, but those who, like the Taira and the Minamoto, were of imperial descent and kept in touch with the capital, were irked by the Court nobility, and were soon struggling for the principal power. This was first successfully seized by Kiyomori, the head ruffian of the Taira, but he did not seize the Throne. The legend of the divine descent was now deeply rooted, and all the collaterals gained

“SUBJECTS EVER UNITED IN LOYALTY”

prestige by it. Besides, the Throne had no attractions for an active and ambitious man, because the Emperor himself had little or no power. Such a man, however, was always glad to contribute a daughter to the imperial bed and to get her child enthroned, much as a successful bourgeois likes to obtain the permanency of a title for descendants who are unlikely to repeat his own successes. So Kiyomori, in whose game emperors were but pawns, compelled the reigning Emperor to marry his daughter. A son soon blessed the union, and when the child was a year old Kiyomori deposed the Emperor and made his infant grandson Emperor in his stead. This rather shocked the courtiers: for a usurper of three years there was a precedent, but for the prince to usurp his father's throne at one year was, they felt, a little steep, and some prognosticated disaster—at least it was said, after disaster came, that they had done so.

Japanese history is full of instances of the annihilation of whole families. To leave an enemy's child alive is to perpetuate the vendetta, and Kiyomori, for the love of a lady, made this fatal blunder. The Minamoto children whom he spared grew up to destroy him, and they made no mistake in their turn, but destroyed the whole seed of the Taira.* At the great sea fight of Dan-no-ura, when the Taira were overthrown, Kiyomori's wife, seeing that the day was lost, and knowing what they had to expect, took the spurious regalia, together with the child Emperor, in her arms, and jumped overboard. The victorious Minamoto, however, were not embarrassed in the least. The Mirror—the identical one with which the Sun Goddess had been tempted out of the cave!—was safe in the Great Shrine at Ise; the Jewel never seems to have mattered very much; and as for the Sword, it had been so often exchanged and so many times left in safe

* See the citation from Longford, p. 68.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

keeping at some new place that it was perfectly easy for the victors to produce another as the only genuine one—as genuine, at least, as the new Jewel produced according to requirements. The difficulty of the Regalia being so easily overcome, all that remained to do was to enthrone another child of the prolific imperial line. A little extra evidence is always welcome, so some obliging scribe wrote a nonsensical rigmarole called the *Book of Swords*, giving the whole history of the Regalia, and demonstrating, of course, that the Three Sacred Treasures which guaranteed the genuineness of the heir that the Minamoto had put on the throne were themselves the veritable gifts entrusted by the Sun Goddess to Ninigi-no-Mikoto when he was sent down from heaven to found an earthly kingdom.

The Minamoto, while reaffirming the divinity of the Imperial Line, displayed their sincerity by consigning its representative to a miserable obscurity. Japan was ruled no longer by the fairytale Court of Heian but by the military autocracy of Kamakura. Yoritomo made the child Go Toba Heaven-descended Sovereign, and the child made Yoritomo Barbarian-subduing Generalissimo. It is true, the barbarians who did not acknowledge the Divine Emperor were now all subdued, but the Shogun had not yet exterminated the enemies of his own race. Yoritomo did not even trouble to keep the Imperial Family under his own hand, as Kiyomori had done. He preferred to work untrammelled by any imperial pretensions to authority or criticism, and set up his administrative capital far to the east, at Kamakura, while the Imperial Family trifled away its time at Kyoto, without even the thrill of impotent intrigue to keep its sense of self-importance alive.

James Murdoch, the historian of Japan, says, "Japanese King-makers, whether civilian Fujiwara autocrats or military

“SUBJECTS EVER UNITED IN LOYALTY”

Mayors of the Palace, have never thought of dispossessing the August Line of the Sun Goddess of the Throne of Yamato. It has always better served their purposes to work through that line and that institution as their instruments.” Kiyomori’s widow made a grave error when she took the Regalia as well as the Emperor with her to the bottom of the sea. She only enabled Yoritomo to consolidate his power forthwith, since it was easy for him to replace both.

Not that Yoritomo’s line prospered: it was established by murder and by murder it was ended. When Go Toba grew up, he made a bid for reigning in fact though at the age of twenty he had been compelled to cease reigning in name by abdicating in favour of his son. Yoritomo’s two sons had already proved useless, a fact to which his widow, Masa, a very masterful lady, did not attempt to blind herself. Her father and brother had already assumed all the executive power when the Emperor Go Toba took it upon himself to issue commands. Masa summoned the generals and said this presumption on the part of an Emperor could not be tolerated. They replied that they would obey her orders—which were that they should march on Kyoto and subdue it. This they did. There were three deposed Emperors and one reigning at the time. The three were exiled to distant islands and kept in abject poverty, while the reigning Emperor was deposed and kept a prisoner in Kyoto, where the wretched child died thirteen years later. Such was the loyalty rendered to God Incarnate! But the line was unbroken. Another child was enthroned, and, since the line of Yoritomo had proved such a failure, and Masa’s family were not of imperial descent, they instituted a series of infant Barbarian-Subduing Generalissimos of Fujiwara stock, and Masa’s family, the Hojo, a capable brood, reigned as Regents.

So now, not only were Emperors deposed and suc-

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

ceeded by infants, but the same fate had overtaken the Shoguns.

The idea persisted, however, that high office as well as sovereignty should be hereditary, and the Hojo family made the office of Shikken, or Regent, hereditary, and though there was some ability passed on from father to son, the same fate overtook them, degeneracy, deposition, and the appointment of a minor becoming the normal course of their life history. Without even divine descent to help them, such families were doomed to die out.

As for the Imperial line, it remained all but forgotten in Kyoto. It was divine, but that was all. Occasionally a scholar, harking back to legendary times when Emperors led their armies, would express a wish for direct imperial rule; but as the line could not be replaced and had no ability, that seemed to be an unattainable ideal. Divinity did not ensure affection, personal respect, or any of those relations of subject towards sovereign which we mean by loyalty. The Emperor might be, and sometimes was, dethroned, exiled, and murdered in exile, and under the Hojo Regents the Shogunate became so feeble that it was not even a cushion between the Court and the Regency.

In 1318 the Emperor Go Daigo succeeded to the Throne, the Regency at that time being held by Takatoki, the last of his line, a youth whose extravagance and self-indulgence threatened ruin to himself and his country alike. Go Daigo, being a vigorous and intelligent man of thirty-two, seeing how the deputies and the deputies' deputies rapidly became even more degenerate and impotent than the Imperial line itself, conceived the idea, or perhaps it was suggested to him, of overthrowing the Hojos and becoming sovereign in fact as well as in name, but he was betrayed by the men in whom he had trusted and exiled to an island. From there he escaped in

“SUBJECTS EVER UNITED IN LOYALTY”

a boat, hidden under a load of seaweed, and, when he landed, a number of those who were very tired of the Regency flocked to his support, the most famous being Kusunoki Masashige and Nitta Yoshisada—two warriors greatly admired to-day as loyalists. The most capable soldier of the time, Ashikaga Takauji, held a command under the Regent, but he saw that Takatoki had made himself unpopular beyond redemption, so he too became a loyalist.

By the valour and perseverance with which he fought, Takatoki brought an evil life to a glorious end, and there was repeated by the loyalist victors, but on a larger scale, the ruthless extermination which had been visited on the vanquished after the battle of Dan-no-ura a century and a half earlier.*

But to the extermination of the disloyal there is no end. Go Daigo has been compared† with Charles the Second as showing by his example that the courage and ability which shine brightly in adversity are apt to be obscured in prosperity by sloth and self-indulgence. Takauji, whose abilities gave him the natural leadership, wanted the Shogunate, but those who had the ear of the Emperor advised him to withhold it. When the rupture came, Masashige and Yoshisada sided with the Emperor, and were defeated, both dying by their own hands, Yoshisada accomplishing the remarkable feat of cutting off his own head. It is not to be supposed that he actually did so, but this legend always sets the hall-mark of valour on the hero of the self-decapitation.‡

Go Daigo fled, and Takauji declared that he had forfeited sovereignty thereby, upon which excuse he enthroned another member of the Imperial House. For a large part of the fourteenth century there were two Emperors in Japan, but they were by no means rivals, for of the four Emperors

* See above, p. 68.

† Longford, *Japan*, p. 100.

‡ Cf. above, pp. 67 and 69.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

of the Southern Court and the six Emperors of the Northern Court, only Go Daigo could be said to have any will in the matter. The abdication lacked the pretence of being voluntary, which was a necessary part of the procedure and considered important by a people who cared nothing for truth but much for propriety. Worse still, Go Daigo got away with the Regalia, and if the Northern Court possessed the Three Sacred Treasures at all, they were counterfeits more recent than those possessed by the Southern Court. It is curious that though the military leaders who died on the field after fighting for Go Daigo are highly venerated to-day, the Emperor himself is held in no special honour. He exhibited a physical and mental vigour rare in a long line of Emperors, and showed a courage and initiative hardly known to his historic predecessors; but he received little support, and the fame of the two loyalists of his day is undimmed by competition. His cause was a lost one: he suffered peril and hardship all his days and died in wretchedness and penury—an example of the fate that awaits a sovereign who would display talents and expert authority, and a commentary on the boast of unbroken loyalty contained in the Imperial Rescript on Education and other official prevarications of modern times.

After sixty years it was decided to end this business of having two Emperors. The Southern Court, possessing the Regalia but nothing else, was acknowledged as the legitimate line, and the Northern Emperor adopted the Southern Emperor as his abdicated father—probably the most inspired example of a legal fiction in all time.

The Shogunate bestowed by the first “False Emperor” continued in being for another hundred and eighty years after this restoration of legitimacy, but it was a period during which civil strife was continuous, mental activity in abeyance, and loyalty unknown.

CHAPTER V

RELIGIOUS GROWTH UNDER A DIVINE MONARCH



BUT for the fact that to-day the Emperor is the religious centre of Japan—impotence apotheosised and worshipped—so much wandering over the historic scene would not have been permissible. Now, however, it is not only permissible but necessary, in order that the reader may know the nature of the claims to a transcendent loyalty which we are constantly required to admire as peculiar to Japan and superior to anything existing elsewhere. But now it is time that we considered the more normal and reputable aspects of religion in that country—those searchings after a higher life as contrasted with the base pretences of a political religion.

Although in China there were in early days considerable dissensions between the followers of Buddha, Confucius, and Laotse, the process which afterwards made it possible, and even usual, for the ordinary Chinese to pay reverence to all of them had gone far enough by the time Japan began to absorb Chinese wisdom to save Japan from the more controversial aspects of their teachings. Confucianism was received along with Buddhism, and at first, in all probability, regarded simply as one branch of Chinese wisdom. We find

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

a celebration of a Confucian festival in the year 701, and a regular recurrence thereafter. It has often been pointed out, when people have referred to Confucianism as a religion, that it is only a system of ethics. It has, it is true, a good deal to say about what pleases heaven and what heaven abhors, and so much on duty to ancestors that only the assumption of their continued existence saves it from being absurd. Yet, though it answers to some definitions of religion, there is nothing about the supernatural, about future rewards and punishments, or about God or heavenly beings.

In China, as a matter of course, temples were dedicated to Confucius, but they were always excessively plain and austere. In Japan Confucianism did not even attain this degree of religiosity; but while Shinto consisted of innumerable gods, of rituals and spells, and nothing worthy of being called thought or teaching, Confucianism was all teaching, and furnished a complete guide to conduct for the Superior Man. Buddhism supplied thought, speculation, emotion, rituals and observances more attractive than those of Shinto, and fostered art in many forms. Along with Buddhism and Confucianism, of course, Taoist ideas also came into Japan, and had no little influence, but the religion does not appear to have attained a separate existence.

At times there was some danger to be apprehended, but fortunately the Japanese scholars did not allow the intellectual integrity of Confucianism to get the better of them. Two early Confucians, Hayashi and Chugen, concluded as a result of their studies that the Emperor had a Chinese origin, but patriotic dogma was already too far advanced for such disturbing conclusions to be safely published, so they destroyed their work together with the evidence on which they had based their findings.* In any case, they were by no

* Armstrong, *Light from the East*. University of Toronto, 1914.

RELIGIOUS GROWTH UNDER A DIVINE MONARCH

means typical of the Confucian teachers who have flourished in Japan, for a militant loyalty was their more common characteristic. A modern scholar* has criticised the claim commonly made for the completeness of the teachings of Confucius on the ground that they lack any account of the relationships between a ruling and a subject race, any prescription for reconciling diverse loyalties, and any pronouncement on the citizen's duty to a non-monarchical government; but though China still lacked unity in the time of the Sage, it was his whole universe, and it is a little unreasonable to find fault with his maxims because they do not apply to all times and places. In his view, loyalty to the monarch is a prime duty, and his teachings therefore found a ready acceptance in Japan; they may even have played a large part in preserving a theoretical respect for the Throne in circumstances which in most countries would have led to its extinction.

It would be decidedly extravagant to accuse the Taoists of Platonism, but a belief in the reality of ideas certainly finds expression in the Taoist habit of inventing a god every time one is needed. That people should believe in such inventions indicates a habit of thought that seems strange to us, but is perhaps not more illogical than some of the ideas which, in this fourth decade of the twentieth century, play a very prominent part in directing the policies of Europe. Some of the Japanese gods have a manufactured look, like the improvised deities of the Taoists; and when to this we add the Buddhist proclivity for identifying denizens of the Shinto pantheon with Indian avatars and Bodhisattvas, we get a very choice confusion of theology, with free transference from one personality to another and easy migration from one creed to another. In another part of this essay (p. 73) the dubious origin of Hachiman, the Shinto God of War, was mentioned,

* Armstrong, quoted above.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

and how he received honour in a Buddhist temple. His identification with the Emperor Ojin is not exclusive, for an equally unsuitable character, Honen, the founder of the Pure Land sect, was also looked on as an avatar of Hachiman, or, alternatively, as an avatar of Jizo, the god who takes dead children into his special care. Honen was an eminent Buddhist; and an eminent Confucian, Nichira, many centuries before, had also been identified with Jizo, who is supposed to have been adopted from the Indian pantheon, where he has the name Kshitigarbha.

To catalogue such identifications and to enumerate the inconsistencies that they involve would be even more unprofitable than it would be laborious. We may take as an example of the way the Japanese like to mix their deities the Seven Gods of Luck, who form a little pantheon by themselves and are one of the most popular subjects of art. They are identified with Japanese, Chinese, and Indian deities, and with Buddhism, Shinto, Taoism, and Brahmanism. To explain this confusion a story has been made up of how Ieyasu asked a great priest, Jigan Taishi, the secret of good government, whereupon the priest expatiated on the power of the Seven Virtues, and wrote the names of the gods most closely connected with them—Ebisu, industry; Daikoku, wealth; Benten, loveliness; Bishamon, wisdom (and sometimes war, which is seldom wise); Fukurokujin, dignity; Jurojin, longevity; and Hotei, generosity. This has even been held up as an example of the Japanese genius for eclecticism, and every good bourgeois heart must warm at the idea of wealth being one of the Cardinal Virtues.

Fortunately, while names, identities and attributes of gods might sometimes be the subject of longwinded discourses on the part of Japanese religionists, it was seldom that the exponent of any of the great variety of beliefs maintained that

his own favourite was necessary for salvation. Even the generality of those who believed that the recitation of the Nembutsu formula was a passport to paradise were not perturbed if others sought a longer and less certain route. The passionate holding of orthodoxies and of heresies, often worked out to a tragic conclusion in Europe, seldom went to such lengths in the Far East.

In Europe, among people with a distaste for thinking, it is not uncommon to find men who advance the opinion that diversity is an illusion. They find an identity in all Protestantism, in all Christianity, even in all religions, on the ground that they are merely different routes to a single goal. Such broadmindedness, or lack of discrimination, is found frequently among Japanese religious leaders, but it seems to have facilitated fission rather than to have promoted unity. Favourite themes, echoed by European writers, are that filial piety and Emperor-worship are the same thing; or that ancestor-worship and loyalty are identical; or that Shinto has no morals but comprises all morals. Sugawara-no-Michizane, a Confucianist who was held in high honour in the Nara period, was a strong amalgamationist, and was later deified as the God of Learning. Passing from the eighth to the seventeenth century, we find Hayashi Razan, another Confucianist, maintaining that there is no real difference between Confucianism and Shinto. On the other hand, Hayashi Razan declared that Christianity had picked bits out of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, and was altogether abominable—but that was obviously to make a good impression on the Shogun, who was engaged in extirpating the recently imported religion. One of his objections to Christianity was that it favoured women, who selfishly adhered to it.

The Confucianist Hoshu, also of the seventeenth century,

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

was far superior intellectually to Hayashi. He did not take the short cut to fatuity by declaring that highly divergent systems were really the same thing, but maintained that Laotse, Confucius, and Buddha were all entrusted with the mission of guiding mankind correctly, but in such a variety of place and circumstance that their plans were necessarily different.

There were a number of teachers who formulated plans for human behaviour, inspired mainly by Buddhist teachings, but who set up as exponents of Confucianism, without anybody, apparently, telling them that they were nothing of the sort. Ieyasu and his successors favoured Confucianism, which was natural, as they were practical men faced with the problems of administration and not much concerned with devotion, so professed Confucianists sought their favour, and such education as there was at that time had a Confucian foundation. There was also a sort of State patronage of Buddhism for an entirely utilitarian purpose. Everybody had to be registered at a Buddhist temple, and the temples thus became the registrars of vital statistics.

One seventeenth-century Confucianist whose views were found distasteful to authority was Yamaga Sozo, who was banished to a distant province and put in charge of Asano Takumi-no-Kami, the Lord of Ako (pp. 81 seq.). Here he was kindly treated, and the stern purposefulness of the Forty-seven Ronin, who many years later had occasion to avenge their lord Asano's death, causes the memory of Yamaga to glimmer in a reflected glory, as it is taken for granted that he was their spiritual father.

Confucianism provided, in the main, the text for the cultivation of feudal loyalty; and the loyalty of which the Forty-seven Ronin are the favourite example is true to its teachings in so far as Confucianism has much to say of duty to

RELIGIOUS GROWTH UNDER A DIVINE MONARCH

one's ruler, and this was diligently taught by the rather muddle-headed specialists, who, as they lived under patronage, were much less concerned with the duty of a lord to his vassals. A favourite Chinese classic has always been the book of the Twenty-four Filial Children, little paragons who indulged in the most fantastic acts of self-sacrifice for the benefit of abominably selfish parents.* Territorial chiefs were always glad to have such teachings inculcated, as it was impressed on the pupils that duty to one's overlord transcended even filial piety. In view of what followed, it will be seen that Confucianism played an important part in the making of modern Japan, since it was an element in the spirit of loyalty which is so prominent—as we are told *ad nauseam*.

That Confucianism enriched Japan intellectually could not be said with any confidence. Its teachers, by the time they thought they had mastered their Chinese texts, had been mastered by them, and had no real contribution to make to the thought of the age. They were not interested in the welfare of their fellow-men except in so far as that might be incidental to successful administration. Spartan living and effort are taught always, and sometimes love and holiness are imported from a Buddhist source. They found a symbolism in the Three Sacred Treasures of the Imperial Regalia, but that needs no great effort and has little moral value; and sometimes, by an inevitable extension of the idea of feudal loyalty, they were led to extol loyalty to the Emperor, even though he was generally immured in his palace and almost forgotten.

Like all transplanted religions, Buddhism in Japan has characteristics peculiar to the country of its adoption. It has

* Perhaps the Filial Children are not very much worse examples of the misuse of fiction for moral purposes than Alcestis, Patient Griselda, and the Hindu faithful wives.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

had vicissitudes, being sometimes followed with enthusiasm and sometimes neglected until it was threatened with decay. An early achievement was to get the killing of animals prohibited, and it saved many human lives by substituting exile for execution;* but again, its priests armed themselves and fought battles. Among the priests were some who have been canonised as saints, and some who, while their scholarship and theology were doubtful, were great artists; but the priests as a body have generally received wholesale condemnation as lazy and immoral parasites. Japan is not the only country where the works of man often have a much more agreeable aspect than the men associated with them; and when one admires a beautiful Japanese temple and finds it impossible to extend admiration to the men who, in priestly robes, walk in procession and participate in the temple services, one reflects that judgments are seldom comprehensive, and that the spirit which created the temples must have been something greater than that of the hangers-on. There is, of course, Chinese inspiration on every hand, but there is also a Japanese endeavour to attain beauty; and though, except in rare cases, the care for cleanliness and careful upkeep has flagged in China, it is still common in Japan. From the beginning the temples in Japan were avid of tax-free property, and so enriched themselves in much the same way as many an ecclesiastical foundation in Europe; but there are also liberal contributions. Some Japanese, notably Fukuzawa, the great educationist of the later nineteenth century, have denied that the Japanese are a religious people; but it is a difficult matter to dogmatise about. There seems to be no great resistance where authority frowns on any particular sect. Yet in the early seventeenth century, when Christianity was extirpated, there were martyrs of a steadfastness up to the

* E.g. the priest Dokyo, who tried to usurp the throne, p. 92.

RELIGIOUS GROWTH UNDER A DIVINE MONARCH

highest Christian standard. Japan also has her fanatics. But on the whole the generous gifts to temples seem to be dictated by the idea that it is a seemly thing to do and that it is well to be on the safe side rather than by great depth of feeling. But though there may be little passionate devotion, there is practically no militant atheism.

It was not long before Japanese Buddhists wanted a Buddhism of their own, and towards the end of the twelfth century the worship of one particular Bodhisattva, Amitabha, became very popular. Why this among the incarnations was chosen, nobody seems to know; but the name was a pleasing one and meant Measureless Light. Moreover, according to its devotees, the repetition of the formula *Namu Amida Butsu* was a sure passport to salvation and could even save others. Perhaps those who invent such formulæ and claim virtue for them consider that the repetition will be a reminder of holy things and divert the mind from evil. Shortly after Honen had established the Jodo sect, which repeated the Nembutsu so continually, Zen was introduced from China. Zen seems to be remotely related to the Indian Yoga, and is credited with much influence in Japan. The Chinese have a very poor opinion of Japanese Zen, and a great English scholar has confessed that he could make but little of it, though it is to-day held in honour in Japan, and is often professed by patriots of the more bloodthirsty kind:

When a sect boldly states that its doctrine must be felt and not read, and that every attempt to state it in speech or writing must be *ipso facto* a failure, the expositor need say no more. Yet the rash pen longs to formulate the ineffable and is apt to suggest that the mysteries which cannot be expressed in words are really non-existent and that the literary history of Zen, though copious, is not a heap of philosophic jewels buried in a little dust, but a farrago of anecdotes reporting grotesque and irrelevant sayings and still more grotesque

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

and often brutal actions. I confess that I am not quite in sympathy with the Zen view of things, and that is why I wish to emphasise the great practical achievements of the sect and to point out that a creed which has produced such remarkable results must be based on something more than mere eccentricity.*

Zen was very insistent on meditation and on wresting the truth from one's inner consciousness, which perhaps accounts for its contributions to art rather than philosophy. Zen is credited with the creation of the artistic household utensils and implements which are a feature of Japanese life; and there is a close connection between Zen and the Tea Ceremony.† The writers of the *Heike Monogatari*, which records the wars between the Taira and the Minamoto, represent the Court ladies as pious Amidists in a degenerate age when the Zen meditation floors were deserted—but actually Zen had not at that time come into vogue, and Honen had only just organised popular Amidism into a regular sect with a formulated creed. Apparently Shinto was also in a bad way, as they said, “The red fence of the shrine is hoary with age; nothing is left but the straw rope of the Gods.”‡ But priestly writers in all countries tend to be Jeremiahs, lamenting the decline in religion.

Perhaps the Amidist writer was melancholy not so much in the thought that his own comparatively new creed was in decline as in the realisation that it had a formidable rival rising up against it. Indeed, the Pure Land sects founded by Honen and Shinran were far from declining. In spite of the extreme simplification of their creed—salvation by repetition of the Nembutsu—perhaps because of it—the Shinshu

* Eliot, *Japanese Buddhism*, p. 399.

† For the most complete account of the Tea Ceremony and all that it signifies, see A. L. Sadler, *Cha-no-yu*, published by Kegan Paul & Co.

‡ *Heike Monogatari*, trans. Sadler, i, p. 99.

RELIGIOUS GROWTH UNDER A DIVINE MONARCH

flourished more than ever. Shinran abolished, so far as he and his followers were concerned, the celibacy of the priesthood, which, owing to the fact that the priests, because of their breaches of the restrictions, always appeared to be far more lecherous than the decent married layman, made their calling a reproach and a hissing. But the simplicity of the creed did not prevent schism, nor did the marriage of the priests ensure virtue: the one only proved that men can always find some excuse for disagreement, and the other that lechery is but one of many human frailties. Nevertheless, the disciples of Shinshu are still extremely numerous, and the religious foundations, which in the early seventeenth century divided into the Eastern and Western Hongwanji, are of enormous wealth. The generosity of worshippers has led in the present generation to scandals in which the hereditary abbot of the one branch was compelled to resign and surrender his patent of nobility owing to his wanton extravagance and flagrant evil living; while the hereditary head of the other branch, fertile in ideas often benevolent and patriotic but always costly beyond calculation, had to be strictly rationed in his expenditure by a committee of leaders of the sect. However, the sect flourishes despite these depredations, and has of late years developed a bent for social work, promoting an education more varied than other Buddhist seminaries affect, and indulging in such work as the reform of ex-prisoners and the amelioration of the poor by means of hospitals and crèches.

Shinshu brought the first breath of intolerance into Japanese Buddhism by preaching that Amida was the only Buddha who should be worshipped, and that the repetition of *Namu Amida Butsu* was the one sure passport to salvation. But this breath of intolerance was soon followed by an answering blast. Nichiren grew up hating the Nembutsu,

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

and he and his followers declare that a single invocation of Amida requires a long expiation in purgatory. In this case one must feel sorry for the Emperor Goshirakawa, who, nearly a generation before Nichiren, used to repeat the Nembutsu sixty thousand times a day and, in fact, died with it on his lips. But the Emperors, being God, can no doubt see to their own comfort after they have put off mortality. Nichiren reinstated as the central figure in the true faith the Shaka of the Lotus Sutra, casting out Amida, and set up an opposition warcry, *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*, "Homage to the Sutra of the Lotus of the Good Law." He condemned others at inordinate length, but also at times with concise brevity: "The Nembutsu is hell; the Zen are devils; Shingon is national ruin; the Risshu are traitors to the country." He brought no new thought or moral principle into Japanese religion, unless we dignify by these names his insistence that he was himself a Bodhisattva, that his doctrine was not for the individual but for the whole nation, and that the Government must suppress everything else. In fact, he made himself such a nuisance that he was exiled to the island of Sado, in the Japan Sea.

Nichiren might well be called the first of the modern patriots. This was felt when patriotism was exalted to the status of a national religion, for "it is said that at the beginning of the Meiji era (1868-1912), a conference of representative Buddhists was held with the object of drawing up an account of the doctrines of the twelve sects, but when it came to formulating the views of the Nichirenites the meeting found it impossible to proceed and ended in a lawsuit."* However, the tide of patriotism had risen above regard for doctrine by 1923, when the political party leaders, Tokonami, Kato, and Inukai, showed themselves patriots by joining in the

* Eliot, *Japanese Buddhism*, p. 279.

prayer to the Emperor for the canonisation of Nichiren, who is now Rissho Daishi (Great Teacher Vindicating the Right). The dangerous thinker of one age is the patriot of the next.

So we have, in the dark Middle Ages of Japan, the gradual emergence of a spirit of intolerance. It was not the sort of intolerance which has often drenched Europe or the countries of Islam with blood. There was never lacking in Japan excuse enough for bloodletting without having to invoke the Higher Powers. Every civil strife was a war to end war, just as every war since the modern era set in has been a war to preserve the peace of the Far East. The Buddhist priests from time to time developed a taste for politics, which generally resulted in a horde of monks sallying forth as noisy but ineffective soldiers, and, in extreme cases, in their temples and monasteries being burnt; but generally a temple was regarded as an abode of peace and allowed to remain so; and the same is true of the few large religious foundations of Shinto, where a priesthood was maintained and some tradition of learning preserved. Those shrines not under imperial patronage would have fared ill had not the Buddhist priests taken charge. And the smaller shrines which had not the expense of maintaining priests but were served by lay-priests or tended by pious villagers continued to exist from force of habit. Ritual and charm, legend and fable, incantation and prayer, rather than the agony of the aspiring mind, were the main constituents of religion. Indeed, the endeavours to understand the Chinese writings earned a reputation for wisdom which was ill deserved since it normally resulted in a dull muddleheadedness. The unspoilt minds of two or three ladies of the Heian period (ninth to twelfth centuries) produced some writings which are still the admiration of scholars, native and foreign, and observers even to-day have often remarked on the readier

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

intelligence of the women of Japan, that of the men being still handicapped by a larger dose of formal education.*

War is generally held to be adverse to literature and the arts, and there are certainly historians who describe the Ashikaga period as the Dark Ages; but Sir George Sansom, than whom there is no higher authority, tells us that, on the contrary, it was a period of no small artistic achievement. Perhaps the men who had no taste for war sought such protection as the religious life could afford and there kept the torch glowing. But the Ashikaga also built themselves palaces and maintained the amenities of the court as well as endured the hardships of the camp.

It was not a great age for literature, but we must not forget the *No* drama, which belongs specially to this period, a singular form bearing resemblances to the ancient Greek. One of these resemblances lies in the taking of incidents from legend and history as subjects for lyrical treatment, and in the case of the *No*, there was a strong Buddhist flavour. The Ashikaga themselves were admirers of Zen, but Zen is regarded in Japan as a Buddhist cult, though any religion not infinitely accommodating would regard it as a heresy. Buddhism, on the doctrinal side, declined, which may be one reason why the Buddhist foundations became the homes of art.

Another cultural form which developed in Ashikaga times was the Tea Ceremony, and this came to have an almost

* Among those whose personal experience has led to this view, its most vigorous expression is perhaps to be found in Dr. Neville Whyman, *The Chinese-Japanese Puzzle*. Marquis Okuma, one of the liveliest minds of modern Japan, instinctively felt the handicap of learning the Chinese characters, and he always inveighed against them and avoided writing them. One is tempted to cite also such lively but unlettered minds as that of Hideyoshi, but Professor Chamberlain was of opinion that youth took the cumbrous system in its stride and that only foreigners find any script difficult.

RELIGIOUS GROWTH UNDER A DIVINE MONARCH

religious aspect. The Tea Masters cultivated the taste for beauty, though, as with artists in all climes, there was "a certain amount of tosh" about their dicta. On general principles they sought the utmost simplicity, and reprobated ostentatious display; but when the upstart Hideyoshi, who was an enthusiast for the Tea Ceremony, displayed a tea-set all in gold, he was praised for his good taste. The ceremoniousness with which the cult was decked out is supposed to have been appreciated by the soldiers and statesmen who took it up, as they found therein a sort of rest-cure. It took their minds off worldly affairs without putting them to the trouble of study or ratiocination, and had all the attractiveness of ritual without the troublesomeness of religion.

The period of the two Courts proved to be a very near thing to there being no Court at all, for it is recorded that Ko Moronao, a leading nobleman under the Ashikaga, told his followers that they could take the estates of the Emperor if they wanted them. "A living Emperor," he said, "is a mere waster of the world's substance, and a burden upon the people. He is not a necessity, but if we must have an Emperor, a wooden effigy would do equally well." These words, though only traditional, are worth remembering now. In those days and for long thereafter, the Emperors had little of the world's substance to waste; but to-day the Imperial Family is the richest in Japan, perhaps one of the richest in the world, which means that the group controlling it controls immense financial and economic resources as well. The great corporations are sometimes spoken of dividing the wealth of Japan between them; but the greatest of all these manipulators of wealth to-day is the Imperial Household Department.

Under the military dictators, Nobunaga and Hideyoshi, who succeeded to the Ashikaga, and under the Tokugawa

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Shoguns—that is to say, for a period of just under three hundred years, ending in 1868, the Emperors practically disappear from view. Hideyoshi made a great display on one occasion of honouring the Emperor, but, having thus magnified himself, he neglected his sovereign thereafter. It is said that the Emperor remained the fountain of honour, and that decorations were greatly prized. If this is true, it might have been supposed that the Court would be able to make a good living out of the Honours List. High moral principles have never stood in the way of such transactions, and in 1929 there was a first-class scandal over the sale of honours, which fetched large sums, and the head of the Decorations Bureau went to prison after an extremely protracted trial. Evidently imperial decorations, however they might be prized, were not regarded in Tokugawa days as having any cash value, for some of the Emperors were reduced to making a little money by the sale of mere autographs.

In such neglect and obscurity lay the Kyoto Court that the Chinese Court forgot its existence and addressed the Shogun as King of Japan. As for the common people, they hardly knew that there was an Emperor; nor was there any reason why they should know anything of their divine sovereign, for though we hear so much of the quality of Japanese loyalty, the Emperors had no friends in those days except the equally impotent nobility which remained attached to the neglected Court. Certainly there was no particular pride in the “Line unbroken for ages eternal,” for travellers who came to Japan were never told that there was an Emperor. They learnt of the Shogun; a few even saw him; and often in their writings they call him the Emperor. Japanese officials about the Shogun must have known that they were making a mistake, but they were not sufficiently interested to correct it. In short, there was no respect

RELIGIOUS GROWTH UNDER A DIVINE MONARCH

whatever for the Divinity incarnate, and no loyalty towards him. He simply continued to exist from force of long custom, and the Shoguns, if they thought of him at all, regarded him as a card which might some day be played once more in the political game. Some hints of his existence did become known, and the theory was invented that there was a Sacred Emperor and a Secular Emperor, just as there were two Lamas in Tibet and two Kings in Brentford.

The German physician Kaempfer, who spent two years (1690-1692) in Japan, and amassed an astonishing amount of information considering the circumstances of the time, calls the Emperor the Ecclesiastical Hereditary Emperor, and the Shoguns he calls "the Crown-Generals and Secular Monarchs."

From an unexpected quarter, however, came a change. In the two and a half centuries of peace under the Tokugawa Shoguns, there was naturally a revival of scholarship, which had suffered in the civil wars, and it was through the demand for a national culture that a knowledge of and interest in the divine ancestry revived. Educated Japanese have rather a sceptical inclination, and most of the serious scholars who in times other than those of an enforced peace would have been military officers, turned to Confucian studies, as they regarded Buddhism rather scornfully as a way of escape from the realities of the world. This meant reliance on Chinese writers, and soon provoked a reaction. There were no foreign enemies against whom to inveigh, so the more nationalistic scholars denounced Chinese scholarship and called for a more exclusive use of the Japanese language and even of Japanese religion.

Far above all others of this school was Motoori Norinaga. He was the leader of what has been called the Shinto Revival. At the time when he was writing, Japan had had no foreign

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

affairs, and only an infinitesimal amount of foreign intercourse, for nearly two hundred years; nor did it seem likely that foreign intercourse would ever be resumed. But for artistic inspiration, for learning, for philosophy, for everything that raises life above the routine of birth, suffering, and death, it was necessary to turn to China. This was enough for the requirements of patriotism. Motoori spent a long life in abusing China and everything Chinese. Unlike the majority of such patriots, however, he did splendid work on the positive side also. It was his idea that Japan must be sufficient for the Japanese, in language, religion, and everything else. It is true, he could find no moral teaching worth the name in Shinto; but that did not abash him: it only provided him with a fresh sling against the Chinese. He gave a taste of his quality in this immortal dictum:

The Japanese are instinctively and naturally noble and virtuous—not like the Chinese, who require a clumsy and artificial system of ethical philosophy for the cultivation of their moral natures.*

After Hideyoshi, the sixteenth-century peasant Napoleon, whose ambition it was to conquer China, there is no greater inspiration in Japan than that provided by Motoori. Dr. Adler would probably find in him an example of the inferiority complex. He continually asserted himself, with a growing exacerbation against his consciousness of Japan's inferiority to China; and it is not at all unlikely that the aggressiveness of the Japanese is inspired by the same emotion. There is no balance in the hatred expressed for China, whose only crime is to have tried from time to time to minimise

* W. G. Aston, *Japanese Literature*. This appears to be a summing-up rather than a literal translation. Elsewhere, Aston says: "Conciseness was not one of Motoori's merits. The seven volumes of which this work (a grammar) consists have been compressed without material loss into seven pages of English."

RELIGIOUS GROWTH UNDER A DIVINE MONARCH

encroachments by suppleness which she could not resist by force. And since Japan is very conscious that nearly all she has she owes to other peoples, the mass of knowledge that she has acquired from Europe and America evokes irritation rather than gratitude.

Looking for something really Japanese, Motoori found it in the *Kojiki*, or "Record of Ancient Matters," the origin of which has already been described. He had to shut his eyes to a great deal, as well as to devote immense industry and erudition to his task of making this a sacred text. But he was helped by the fact that the book had passed as completely out of common knowledge as the Emperors themselves. That the text was in Chinese characters could not be helped, but he used Japanese pronunciations wherever possible, calling the *Kojiki* the *Furu Koto Bumi*, which is much as if one should call a *jinrikisha* a *hito chikara kuruma*, a form of Japonification that even the most patriotic avoid. Motoori rejected doubt with a fervour equal to that of any Christian Fundamentalist, and though his own erudition must have informed him that even as it appears in the *Kojiki* the Japanese folklore has more than a little Chinese admixture and deals with personifications of natural phenomena, he curses the euhe-merists and says, "What doubt can there be that Amaterasu Omikami is the great Ancestress of the Mikados, and that she is no other than the Sun of Heaven which illumines this world? These things are in their nature infinite, not to be measured, and mysterious."

The arduousness of his labours helped to convince him of the importance of his materials; he carried with him a whole school of exegesists and commentators, and to-day it is dangerous to criticise this literal belief.

In abusing Buddhism, along with the Chinese who had brought it, Motoori was unjust, for not only does Japan owe

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

such philosophy and morality as she has to Buddhism but she also owes the preservation of Shinto to the Buddhist priests. He would have had to be careful in these days, for some of the Emperors whose divinity he re-established were pious Buddhists, and his thoughts on the promoters of Buddhism might have got him into trouble as being a reflection on those past divinities. On the other hand, he might have maintained that such monsters as Yuriaku and Buretsu were perfect because they were divine. When a man sets out, as Motoori did, to pour scorn on the only morality and philosophy his country ever had, it would be absurd to expect consistency.

Perhaps the strangest fact in the Shinto Revival is that Motoori and his school had no idea of the ultimate development of their teaching. They wanted Shinto to be exalted and Buddhism cast down under its feet; they wanted Chinese influence to be extirpated and Japonism to flourish pure and undefiled; they would have Japan do without moral teachings and philosophical studies because the descendants of the gods required neither; they demanded a separation of Buddhism from Shinto and a purification of the shrines. And yet, writing nearly a hundred years later, that great English student of Japanese, W. G. Aston, said of the Shinto revival, "At the present day this religion is practically extinct." It so lacked ethical content or intellectual interest that he may well have thought so; but it is none the less a menace to the world's peace to-day and is likely to be the ruin of Japan to-morrow.

Motoori and his followers were loyal to the Shogunate, and, while emphasising the divine origin of the Imperial Family, apparently had no idea of rendering divine honours to the Emperor or of restoring dignity and authority to the Throne. Nor did the Shogun, though suspicious like all

RELIGIOUS GROWTH UNDER A DIVINE MONARCH

tyrants, imagine such an outcome, or he would have taken appropriate steps to discourage such studies. All that most people saw in the Shinto Revival was a new style in writing Japanese, practised by some enthusiasts who, like those English pedants who prate of the superiority of Anglo-Saxon speech, sought a native vocabulary. In the Japanese case there was not even the excuse that the native words were short and forcible, for the pure Japanese was terribly long-winded, contrasting sharply with the terseness of the Chinese monosyllables.

Shinto for the time benefited little. The Grand Shrines at Ise and Idzumo had always been under direct Shinto care, and were appanages of the Imperial House. Some tradition of Shinto learning had been preserved there, and in a few other big shrines. The new movement was no popular spiritual awakening, and it made little difference either to the important shrines where the ritual was preserved or to the less important ones cared for by the Buddhists. It served, however, to minister in some degree to national self-esteem, and encouraged the Japanese to regard themselves as a superior race, a feeling that is pleasantly free from any sense of obligation to act in a superior manner. The idea was easily propagated that a nation of such transcendent qualities should be as independent intellectually as politically. The feeling that they owed everything to China came to be irksome, though there had in the past been little consciousness of the debt, for even newly adopted things soon lose their strangeness and are regarded as native productions. The Shinto Revivalists, however, awoke a realisation of overwhelming cultural debt, and this created a new resentment against China, for human nature resents the obligation to feel gratitude.

Japan was ripe for a change, for the two and a half centuries

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

which the Tokugawa Shogunate had lasted was an exceptionally long period for one rigid form of government to remain in being. It was also an unusually long time for one family to produce men sufficiently able to carry on an administration which, elaborate as were its regulations, depended mainly upon the hereditary capacity of the line of rulers. Under such a rule restrictions continually multiplied, until life was so circumscribed with prohibitions and espionage as to become unbearable. Rebellion was in the air.

Moreover, Japan was awakened to the fact that, while she had remained strictly secluded, things had moved fast and far in the world without. Echoing European criticisms, Japanese have often said that they were not recognised as a civilised nation until they armed themselves and made ready for war. It might with even more justice be said that the Japanese did not recognise the possibility of any foreign culture until they saw the guns of Commodore Perry pointed at them in 1854. For some time, notwithstanding, it remained a capital crime to travel abroad, but it was some of the young men who defied this ban who ultimately brought about the reform of the country, and saved it from chaos.

We need not here consider the details of that great transformation, which has been the theme of many scribes. One thing became very clear to the men who took the lead—that there was a considerable danger of disruption. An internal revolution was about to happen, but it was no longer a matter of indifference to the world without, and this world was capable of decisive interference. If different factions sought the aid of the Western Powers in a civil war the kingdom might be divided and come under the dominion of strangers. The danger was not a fanciful one. Foreign countries had entered into relations with Japan, and their representatives were ready to give advice to the leaders of

RELIGIOUS GROWTH UNDER A DIVINE MONARCH

opposing parties. The French Minister was strongly in favour of the retention of the Shogunate, but most of the others were inclined to favour those who regarded it as obsolete and wished to be rid of it. There were a hundred good reasons why the old régime should be abolished, but the most popular reason for revolt against the Shogunate was that it had allowed the land to be polluted by the presence of the Western barbarians.

The reformers won a swift victory over the adherents of the Shogun. Indeed, its very swiftness constituted a danger unless a very strong bond of union could be found. It was not practicable to found a new and stable government on xenophobia, and the victors went infinitely further than the Shogunate ever thought of doing in the way of foreign intercourse. A wholesale reform was necessary, and centralisation was the first need. The Tokugawas had kept a firm hand on the territorial chieftains, but these had ruled in their own domains like independent princes, and, where disputes had arisen with foreigners, had refused to obey the central Government. The Shogun was now gone, and there was no other rallying-point—except the Emperor. What was implied, though it had not been definitely expressed, in the Shinto Revival, came to the forefront. That in which Japan was peculiar, and in which she differed from other nations, was that she had a mythology according to which Japan was the first of all countries and had a line of sovereigns who derived their descent from the gods.

With the Chinese graft of reverence for ancestors, which had grown into the fibre of the people, it was no very excessive flight of the imagination to picture Japan as one big family, all looking up to the Emperor as God and Father. It was true, there was little in historic times to show that this actually was the Japanese sentiment, but the idea had become

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

not altogether unfamiliar thanks to the writings and the propaganda of the Shinto Reformers. It was not only the Shogun who was swept away by the reforms, but the territorial nobles as well, and not merely the *daimyo* but their private armies. The reformation was made the easier by the fact that the two most powerful *daimyo*, those of Satsuma and Choshu, shared the bulk of the power and privilege among retainers and friends, and that for many of the others the compensation given was ample recompense for the loss of privileges which had in many cases become irksome obligations rather than a source of gratification. The samurai suffered considerably, for loyalty was always the duty of the retainer to his lord, never that of the lord to his retainer. But large numbers found careers in the army or honourable employment in the police. In any case their old employment was obsolete. For generations they had had to nourish their martial mood on tradition and swagger, and the bourgeoisie referred to them contemptuously as rice-eaters, or, as we should say, non-producers.

The Emperor Komei, who was not remarkable for mental ability but was a fanatical hater of foreigners, died with a suddenness so opportune that there were suspicions that natural causes were not entirely responsible; and it would be a piece of historic irony well in keeping with the fabulous loyalty of Japan if he was indeed removed from the path in order that the line might be made more illustrious. Whether nature or human agency brought it about, it was his son Meiji who was "restored", and became in official tradition a figure compounded of wisdom and magnanimity.

So, in 1868 was resumed, on a larger scale than Motoori had dreamed of, the Shinto Revival, Shinto and Buddhism were separated, Buddhist priests being compelled to vacate the Shinto shrine premises which they had looked after.

RELIGIOUS GROWTH UNDER A DIVINE MONARCH

The change-over is always represented as having been effected without any disturbance whatever; but there are Japanese who are very positive about the transfer having been consummated only after indignation had expressed itself in many places by fighting. Chamberlain says: "The lover of Japanese art will bear the Shinto revivalists ill-will for the ridiculous 'purification' which has destroyed countless gems of Buddhist architecture and ornament—not for the sake of a grand moral ideal, as with the Puritans of Europe, but for an ideal immeasurably inferior to Buddhism itself."*

Many of the most beautiful Buddhist temples were destroyed, or preserved only by being surrendered to the Shintoists as being shrines. A patriotic zeal which could magnify itself in an orgy of destruction always appeals to the more ruffianly elements, and one Banbayashi Mitsuhira, who had been a Buddhist priest but saw opportunity for advancement in the Shinto movement, is credited with this choice dictum:

Originally we, the people of the Land of the Gods, were a clean people, but we went astray and became slaves to Buddhism and preached compromise with dirt. But from now on, we cast you

* Chamberlain's use of the Puritans as a comparison is interesting, because the Shintoists are not merely inclined to destroy the beautiful work of others, but, like the Puritans, to make places of worship without beauty. The *torii*—the sort of open gateway that stands before a Shinto shrine, has had a considerable elegance imparted to it by the Buddhists, in just proportions and an upward slope of the ends of its top cross-bar. At such places as the Meiji tomb and Yasikuni shrine a "purer" style has been adopted, with plain straight poles, while size has been considered more important than suitable proportions. Many shrines have a good deal of beauty, for which they are indebted to Buddhist influence, and the tendency is to eschew such attractions. In the buildings specially erected for the enthronement ceremonies there is no beauty whatever. They are but temporary, it is true, but that is no excuse for their lack of elegance. It will be a sad thing if patriotism comes to mean uglification as well as tyranny and injustice.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

off, ye Buddhas! And be ye not angered, for we are a clean people of the Land of the Gods.*

The leading men of the time, however, were realists, who promoted beliefs according to their estimation of their utility, and were not themselves religious fanatics. Seeing that they had made a mistake in promoting destruction, they called a halt before it had gone too far. They cared little about Buddhism, its temples and its priests, but they realised that it was deeply implanted in the hearts of the people, and that their attempt to bring about a religious unification was actually causing division and a deep discontent; but a policy of utility is apt to fluctuate, and between 1868 and 1875 there were some extraordinary tergiversations. With the proclamation of Shinto as the national religion, official propagandists were appointed. These were afterwards abolished, and a new priestly office, *Kyodo Shoku*, or "teacher and leader," appointed, to which both Shinto and Buddhist priests were eligible. Then Shinto priests were declared ineligible, and soon *Kyodo Shoku* was abolished. When the movement was hot for a Shinto monopoly, the priests, who had hitherto avoided death as an uncleanness, were required to perform funerals, which had been an important function of the Buddhist priesthood; but as the wave receded, they found themselves forbidden to do what had formerly been enjoined.

The attempt to combine the religions was no more successful than the movement for their separation, and in 1875 joint propaganda was prohibited. Meanwhile Christianity was making a bid for popularity, and this it was difficult to gainsay, though it made the need for a common national bond all the greater. In 1889 came the Constitution, with its guarantee

* Cited by Holtom, *The National Faith of Japan*, from the Shinto history of Kono Shozo.

RELIGIOUS GROWTH UNDER A DIVINE MONARCH

of religious liberty, in 1890 the Imperial Rescript on Education* was promulgated, and then came the remarkable declaration that there were two kinds of Shinto, namely religious Shinto and State Shinto, of which State Shinto was not a religion at all, but only a mark of reverence and respect (to the Emperor). In 1899 the Education Department prohibited religious instruction and the holding of religious services in schools even outside the regular curriculum.

By making the declaration concerning State Shinto and promulgating the rule about religion in schools, and taking no step to put either into effect, the Japanese authorities provided themselves with instrumentalities for compulsion when a convenient time might arise, without provoking the opposition which an attempt to make its desires immediately effective would have aroused. The object was clear—to render nugatory the constitutional promise of religious freedom and to provide means for enforcing the acknowledgement of the divinity of the Emperor when the times were propitious.

The invigorated Shinto was even made to serve a social purpose in line with the ideas of Christendom. The Buddhists had never been interested in marriage, which they regarded only as a relief “for those who have not the gift of continency” (as the Book of Common Prayer also has it), but the celebration of marriages at Shinto shrines gave them something of the social importance that they acquire in Christendom, so such marriages gradually became fashionable. The presentation of the newly-born child at the Shinto shrine is also more common than before and much more frequent than the Shinto marriage.

It was chiefly in respect of the relations of the subject to the Emperor that dogma was invented and compulsion provided

* For the text of the Rescript and its significance, see pp. 137 and 212.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

for. The Imperial Throne was declared to be "coeval with heaven and earth." There was, even according to the official dogma, definitely a first Emperor, Jimmu Tenno, who ascended the Throne in 660 B.C., but the gods had ruled from time immemorial. Curiously enough, the gods used sometimes to die, though in their shrines they live for ever and prayers are offered to them. Jimmu is sometimes referred to as the first *mortal* Emperor; but the Imperial Ancestors live for ever also—in fact, there is very little difference. Gods and Emperors alike were born, copulated freely, begat offspring, died, and still live; and, perhaps on the principle that a live dog is better than a dead lion, the reigning Emperor nowadays (though not formerly) is God *par excellence*. The real difference between Jimmu and his predecessors seems to be that before 660 B.C. Japan was simply an Olympus, while Jimmu somehow acquired a population to rule over.

The Restoration was a successful revolution brought about by the urgent necessity of finding a new form of government to substitute for one so obsolete as no longer to be workable. The men who had not travelled had only Chinese ideas to fall back upon, and these always envisaged a Son of Heaven. Those who had travelled also saw in the Emperor a nucleus for a united nation, but they had learnt in Europe that a monarch might be neither a despot nor a puppet, but a constitutional sovereign. It was evident that the "restored" Emperor could not be expected to display the qualities of an Ieyasu: one of the diplomatists who saw him at one of his first emergencies from seclusion described him as a heavy-eyed youth, with his face made up and effeminately dressed—a typical product of the harem. This was before the legend of godlike wisdom was invented, and to the men who had to consider the problem, constitutional monarchy seemed a heaven-sent theory. The Emperor must not be allowed to

RELIGIOUS GROWTH UNDER A DIVINE MONARCH

wield power now he was restored any more than he had done for centuries past, and as the Japanese mind was never bound by any narrow system of logic, it easily conceived the idea that the Emperor would rule according to the advice of his Ministers, and that at the same time the theory of State should be that the Ministers should be the servants of the absolute will of the God-Emperor. And as the whole drama was being played out with an interested Christendom as audience, the Shogun and the *daimyo* who had fought for him and lost were pardoned instead of suffering the traditional punishment of death.

CHAPTER VI

THE NEW SHINTO

●

HAVING no message of its own, the new State religion did not spread as a popular faith, but it gained prestige through the systematic glorification of the Emperor. Early in the reign a great effort was made to educate the nation, and through the schools the new teaching was inculcated. The school books contain stories from the *Kojiki*, bowdlerised and made suitable for youth, but they are related and taught as history; nor is the teacher at liberty to cast any doubt on their absolute truth, but is supplied with copious instructions how to make them edifying.

The manner in which the difficulties resulting from the promise of religious liberty were overcome was a masterpiece of prevarication even for a nation which Commodore Perry and his Chaplain Hawks called "this ingenious and highly untruthful people," and which Townsend Harris, the first American Minister to Japan, called "the greatest liars on earth." So far as the Buddhists were concerned, they were never exclusive, and, if left free to worship in their own way, had no objection to being compelled to worship in some other way also. Besides, they had adopted the Japanese gods as Bodhisattvas, and the Shintoists returned the compliment by acknowledging that the Bodhisattvas were *kami*. Since Motoori, it is true, there were some patriots who would not

THE NEW SHINTO

hear of such an exchange of compliments, but it still remained true of the great bulk of the people.

It was not quite such an easy matter where Christians were concerned. Christianity had to be taken in a specially Japanese manner if even the possible validity of other religions was to be assumed. But it was from the Shinto side that special claims first came, when the Bureau of Shrines was made separate from the Bureau of Religions, and exalted to a higher level. In due time, even this was offered as proof that Shinto was not religious, and that school children of all religions might be taken to the shrines on the prescribed occasions. For some years there had been a gradual tightening up of the rules about schools visiting the shrines *en masse*, with a consequent recurrence of discussion thereupon. There had been pronouncements on the subject, and in 1918 Mr. S. Tsukamoto, Chief of the Bureau of Shrines, endeavoured to settle the question with the following reasoned opinion:

In discussing the matter of shrine institutions, it is necessary first of all to state that the shrines are not organs of religion. It appears well-nigh impossible for foreigners who do not understand the organisation of our nation to comprehend this point. This misunderstanding is not confined to foreigners. Even among Japanese there are those who needlessly confuse the shrines with religion. It is highly regrettable that on this account the feelings of the people are stirred up from time to time over the sentiment of reverence (towards the shrines). It is not my intention here to consider the sentiment of reverence from a philosophical point of view and attempt to determine whether or not it contains religious ideas. It may be asseverated without the least hesitancy, however, that from the standpoint of national law the shrines are not organs of religion.

It is obvious from the wording of this announcement that it was an endeavour to reconcile the missionaries to the frequent requirements that their classes march to the local

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

shrine, where priests in their robes recite prayers and go through the whole ritual prescribed—a performance they are asked to accept as wholly secular. A very different attitude is taken by learned Shintoists in the Motoori tradition, some of whom express the greatest indignation at and contempt for the official subterfuges. A typical earnest Shintoist is Dr. Kakehi, of the Law Department of the Imperial University.

“Shinto,” he says, “is the faith at the basis of all religions. . . . It is the religion of religions.” By an elaborate philosophical argument he constructs his theology. The Great Life of the Universe is expressed in a sort of trinity selected from the deities mentioned in the mythical record, of whom the Sun Goddess is one. The Emperor as a descendant of the Sun Goddess is thus related to the Great Life of the Universe, the Absolute, and is “god revealed in man” or “manifest deity.” “The Emperors of our country are persons equipped without parallel in the world; they are both centres of (religious) faith and temporal power.”

“The centre of this phenomenal world is the Imperial Country (Japan), from this centre we must expand this great Spirit throughout the world.”

“The expansion of Great Japan throughout the world and the elevation of the entire world into the Land of the Gods is the urgent business of the present, and again, it is our eternal and unchanging object.”*

Here we have the logical result of the transformation of the tribal deity into the Absolute. “The world” of Amaterasu was merely Japan, but now Amaterasu is a manifestation of the Creator of the Universe, and her world is the round world and all that therein is, or perhaps the “physical world” of Sir Arthur Eddington. The educated Japanese, if questioned on such a point as this, laughs and says, “How absurd!” and modestly points out that Japan is far behind several other

* Rev. E. Ryerson, *Shinto and its Modern Developments*, p. 51. London, 1924.

THE NEW SHINTO

countries in resources and power. But the same modesty has denied in advance all the achievements made. Dr. Kakehi is quite serious, however, and so was the Far Eastern Conference called by General Baron Tanaka, the Premier, in June 1927, and whose conclusions were expressed in the report surreptitiously published as the "Tanaka Memorial". That report paid first attention to immediately realisable ambitions, but set no limits to the expansion, when the times were propitious, of Japan's dominion.

The learned Dr. Kato Genchi, Associate Professor of the Tokyo Imperial University in Charge of the Chair of Shinto, leaves no doubt of the religious nature of the ceremonies at the shrines in which teachers and pupils are compelled to participate:

The Emperor is incarnate Deity, and occupies in Japanese faith the position which Jehovah occupied in Judaism. . . . The pith and essence of Shinto is the unique patriotism of the Japanese, together with national morality transfused with religious feeling. . . . We cannot pass over the fact that these ceremonials (at the shrines) are accompanied by a faith in the divine aid of a great spiritual power. . . . The shrines cannot be limited as being merely edifices where past heroes are commemorated in an ethical sense. The affairs of the Festivals are pure religion. To regard them as other than religious is indeed a biased interpretation and must be pronounced an extreme misrepresentation of the shrines.

In other words, the official explanation is denounced by the highest authorities on Shinto as an unscrupulous mendacity designed to overcome the objections of missionaries and foreigners generally, whose participation in the shrine ceremonies is particularly desired in order that to the populace may be demonstrated the fact that the Emperor is the God of Gods to whom all the peoples of the earth do homage, whatever inferior cult they may also follow. It is significant

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

that the most genuinely religious among the Shintoists disapprove of the official prevarications, as must all whose faith is real. The officials, however, like the Roman augurs, smile behind their hands, not believing themselves, but following and promoting the belief as a policy; and is there not something almost sublime in a belief that Japanese mendacity is mighty and will prevail:

For the large majority who have no objection to the official shrine-worship, the officials are, of course, well pleased that it should be as religious as the measure of the mentality of the worshippers allows, and they regard with approval the enthusiasm of the earnest Shintoists. If those with conscientious scruples quote the authorities, from Motoori Norinaga to Kato Genchi, as showing that the shrine ceremonies are religious, they are met with a polite assurance that such ideas are only the private opinions of individuals, and carry no authority.

The final resort of the official mind in defending the proposition that in spite of preferred treatment accorded the shrines, Japan is without a State religion, lies in the formal assertion that, regardless of what the objective study of competent scholarship may reveal, Shrine Shinto is not classified as "religion" (*shukyo*) under Japanese law. This is a point that is especially insisted on by the authorities and is advanced by them as the primary and decisive argument for the non-religious character of the State system. In and of itself, of course, it says nothing regarding the intrinsic nature of State Shinto. It is, rather, a strong legalistic affirmation, expressive both of political necessity and of a formalistic, bureaucratic spirit which subordinates logical consistency to the interests of external control.*

Dr. Holtom, at the conclusion of a thorough examination of the whole question, with every definition of "religion"

* *The National Faith of Japan: A Study in Modern Shinto*, by D. C. Holtom, Ph.D., D.D. (Kegan Paul, 1938), p. 306.

THE NEW SHINTO

taken in turn, comes to this conclusion, despite all official assurances to the contrary:

Modern Shrine Shinto is a thoroughgoing religion. It is the State religion of Japan. In it we discern an extraordinary example of the survival in the culture of the present day of a form of national worship which presents interesting parallels with the State religions that dominated the civilisations of Western Asia and the Mediterranean area thousands of years ago.

The schools are naturally the great forcing-bed of this State religion. National education in Japan has many admirable features, but it can only be regarded as a perversion of its virtues when it is used primarily for the inculcation of a belief so manifestly false that it can only end in making Japan the laughing-stock of the world. It is by the sedulous teaching of the young, however, that the Emperor-cult has been promoted in these days to such monstrous growth. Not only are the puerile mythology and the preposterous history incorporated in the school books; not only are the pupils marched to the shrines on festival days for worship; but the worship of the Emperor is inculcated in the school itself. Every recognised school has its Imperial Portrait—an enlarged photograph of the reigning Emperor. On holidays the pupils assemble at the usual hour, and in absolute silence they stand while the Imperial Rescript on Education is read, and then bow low to the Portrait. The Rescript reads:

Know ye our Subjects,

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting, and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue: Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein lies the source of Our education. Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

harmonious; as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts; and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore, advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne, coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye be not only Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers.

The Way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by their descendants and the subjects; infallible for all ages and true for all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence in common with you Our Subjects that we may all attain to the same virtue.

This good advice, the composition, in all probability, of Prince Ito, who was clever at such things, is always spoken of as though it were the Word of God himself. It has been noticed that in Christian colleges, the youths maintain a reverent bearing and a dead silence while the Rescript is being read, whereas during prayers or Bible reading there is much shuffling and whispering: so impressed on the mind of Young Japan has been this imperial exhortation. Professor Tanaka, a university lecturer on Shinto, has said, "The Imperial Rescript on Education gives the essential elements of Shinto, that is to say, it expresses the last testament of our Imperial Ancestors, which must be kept by our people." The good doctor was evidently trying to say the proper thing, but he rather emphasises the fact that, while the impeccable instructions that the Rescript contains are purely Confucian, it is entirely apocryphal as a statement of historic fact. As the Rescript stands and without commentary, there is nothing in it which the devotees of other religions can object to.

The activities in connection with the Portrait by no means

THE NEW SHINTO

end with the reading of the Rescript and the lumbar flexions. Until about 1920, practically all schools in Japan were of clapboard construction, highly inflammable, and very inefficiently heated. Consequently it was no uncommon accident for a school to catch fire and be burnt down. When this happened, it was the head-master's duty to rescue the Portrait. The thing could be replaced for five shillings, but that was not the point. Nominally it was the gift to the school of the Emperor, and as such it was sacred. Many an unhappy man has delivered himself up as a burnt offering in the flames of his school in a hopeless attempt to save the Portrait. It may be assumed that the victim was often none too willing, but it is better to die than to face the sneers of those who exalt their own patriotism by depreciating their neighbour's—a breed known to every country but prolific in Japan in proportion to the emphasis laid on patriotism there. No Japanese newspaper has ever protested against the folly of dying for an enlarged photograph: none would dare even if it desired to do so.

Though the Rescript is quite untrue from the historian's point of view, it is at the same time so moderate as to be incapable of exciting antagonism. In other directions a similar moderation has been shown. The Shinto mythology recorded in the *Kojiki* is so ridiculous and puerile that, except as paraphrased in the readers for the junior classes in the schools, or taught to conscripts, it is not insisted on too strongly. Indeed, the reading of that unique volume is not advocated even by the zealots who discover in it a universal faith and a destiny of world-conquest for Japan. Its translation into English (with here and there an indecent passage in Latin) is looked upon as regrettable rather than as a revelation to the world of the greatness of Japan. But where this fabulous history slides imperceptibly from the Plain of High

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Heaven to the sacred earth of Japan, it becomes history, the accuracy of which must not be questioned, what though the earlier Emperors were apt to have lives of antediluvian length. Counting back from the known to the unknown, in the manner of Bishop Ussher, who located the Creation in 4004 B.C., we find Jimmu Tenno ascending the throne on February 11, 660 B.C., and though at the beginning of the century it was permissible to speculate on the probably mythical character of this monarch, it would be blasphemy to do so now. The officially adopted line of Emperors must not be doubted.

One unfortunate effect that this has had is that Japanese anthropologists and ethnologists have had to confine their studies to the lesser breeds without the Rescript. It is apparent that the union of Japanese and individuals from less favoured lands produces fertile offspring; and thus some biological difficulty is created in believing that the Japanese are descended from the Gods while the Chinese may come from *Sinanthropus Pekinensis* and the British from *Eoanthropus* of Piltdown. But such difficulties are easily overcome by the Japanese mind. As Motoori said, "It is the quality of the faith that matters: its object may be only a fish's head." The reader is free to regard this as a literary flourish or as a confession that all that Motoori set his heart upon had a very ancient and fishlike smell. Speaking generally, the Japanese mind is in what Lévy Bruhl calls the prelogical stage. Perhaps this is a very reckless statement to make, but what other explanation can be offered of the fact that the Japanese believe that a falsehood becomes true by being officially stated, and that they find no difficulty in believing in things which are incompatible with each other?*

* The reader will doubtless call to mind in this connection a large number of official announcements made in connection with the war that Japan conducted against China in 1937-9.

Criticism has become absolutely impossible. Though the mythology, as has been said, is so absurd that except as paraphrased for primary school readers, it is generally discreetly avoided, it must on no account be questioned. In 1934 a young Japanese lay preacher (a dentist by trade) indiscreetly remarked that the stories told of the Sun Goddess indicated a mentality not very high in a human being and certainly unworthy of deity. Patriots overheard him, and he was prosecuted and sentenced to six months' imprisonment, the sentence being confirmed by the court of appeal. And it is notable that he was punished not for blasphemy, but for disrespect towards the Imperial Family. This indicates how far-reaching a charge of disrespect may be.

It might be held that the lay preacher had made remarks so gratuitous that he "asked for it". But a far worse case is that of Dr. Inoue Tetsujiro, a great scholar and loyalist, mentioned by Chamberlain as one who has tried to infuse new life into Shinto by decking it out in borrowed ethical plumes. In one of his learned works Dr. Inoue spoke of the Three Sacred Treasures as being of possibly disputable authenticity. No rational person can believe that the Mirror and Jewel of the Sun Goddess and the Sword found in the tail of a serpent by her brother the Storm God really exist—yet they form the Imperial Regalia which authenticate the enthronement of the Divine Emperors to this day. Dr. Inoue's book was too learned to attract much attention, and it was upwards of a year before his philosophic doubt was detected by a reader. When notice was drawn to it, however, the censor who had passed the book for publication was punished, the poor man having been probably quite unable to read it, and Dr. Inoue was prosecuted. An ignorant ruffian, Toyama Mitsuru, who has risen to great fame and influence by boasting continually of his own loyalty and decrying that

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

of better men, made it his business to see that Dr. Inoue was turned out of the Imperial University, of which he had been an outstanding ornament for many years. Not a man came forward to defend him.

Some years afterwards he attended a meeting held in memory of his great friend Sugiura Jugo, a scholar and patriot like himself, and he was asked to say a few words. Extolling his deceased friend, he referred to him with an informal honorific as Sugiura-kun, just as an Englishman in like circumstances would use the plain surname. There was a crowd of ruffians of the Toyama type in the assembly waiting for an opportunity to display their patriotism. This was all they needed. One of them leapt on the platform, and, shouting insults, struck Inoue a blow which stunned him. While he lay helpless others kicked him, beat him with chairs, and flung any handy missile at him. A university professor who attempted to intervene received injuries which kept him in hospital for a month. The aged Inoue, among other injuries, lost one of his eyes, but the newspapers which reported this did not offer any criticism of the patriots. One man was prosecuted, but he was not punished.

This was a very fair example of Japanese patriotism as manifested in these days. It is the direct outcome of false teaching and obscurantism. It would seem from this and some other cases that the more distinguished service a man has done, the more liable he is to be the victim of blatant patriots: there is a special kudos in discovering shortcoming in a great man that is lacking in finding fault with a nonentity.

Dr. D. C. Holtom* refers to Dr. Inoue as "the father of the scientific study of religion on the part of modern Japanese scholars," and in another place he makes a plea for a more realistic presentation of the early myths, saying:

* *The National Faith of Japan: A Study in Modern Shinto*, pp. 109 and 312.

THE NEW SHINTO

If this were done, the extreme definiteness with which some of the traditional events in the early national life are commemorated would have to be given up, but the promise of gain in trustworthiness in the eyes of a growing group of historically minded men and women would be more than compensation for any supposed shrinkage in the antiquity of national institutions.

Dr. Holtom's studies in this subject, though deep, must be purely academic, as he seems to be unaware of Dr. Inoue's mischances; and though he discourses on the increasing pressure of orthodoxy, he gives no hint of the fact that "historically minded" people in Japan have to be increasingly cautious in their speech or writing, and that some branches of study have to be kept practically secret. Such is the case, however. Thirty years ago there was a considerable measure of freedom of thought, but to-day there is hardly any.

This does not mean that there is no scepticism. The simple are filled with fables which they are taught as absolute truth, and are inspired with a real fanaticism by the official orthodoxy. Among the educated and highly placed it is probable that scepticism increases, though most of them take it for granted that belief is good for the masses. One cannot fail to be reminded of Tsarist Russia in the days when the educated felt secure in the belief of the ignorant populace in the Little Father. Such a false structure of society must come to the same end—a sweeping away of false gods along with all those who pretended to believe in them.

In the refurbishing process which Shinto has undergone for the glorification of the Emperor and for the benefit of the group who govern in his name, the more important shrines have, of course, had their share of increased reverence. Ise was always a Shinto stronghold, but an old print suggests

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

that the spick-and-span severity of to-day is comparatively recent. It has a certain grandeur which owes much to the magnificent trees surrounding it. The shrine buildings are much like others except that they are bigger, being built of more massive logs; and they are so set that a near approach and even a direct view are impossible, so that an air of mystery which is closely akin to awe surrounds them. In the grounds without are some of the ugliest guns that were ever cast, relics of the Russian war and a desecration of beautiful precincts. Every important shrine in the country, and a good many unimportant ones also, sport similar trophies, a constant reminder that the Emperor, like his predecessor Ojin, is a God of War.

The Ise Shrine was the scene, on February 11, 1889, of a typical Japanese tragedy. It was the accession day of the mythical first Emperor, Jimmu Tenno, chosen as suitable for the proclamation of a Constitution the text of which was soon to be regarded as sacred and unalterable in letter, but in spirit to be set aside whenever convenient. Walking round the shrine buildings, Viscount Mori, Minister for Education and one of Japan's most enlightened men, came to a curtain hung in an opening as a piece of mystification since there was nothing to see behind it. The Viscount put the edge of the curtain aside with his walking-cane, whereupon a Shinto enthusiast, Nishino Buntaro, a man of no account whatsoever, leapt forward and stabbed him to death. There were armed men present, who immediately cut him down; but the murderer was almost idolised; pilgrimages were made to his tomb, he was deified in a shrine built for him, and Mori is remembered in Japan to-day merely as the man who had the privilege of being murdered by this hero. The foulest murder, so long as a patriotic reason can be found for it, enthrones the assassin in the hearts of his countrymen. It

THE NEW SHINTO

took only twenty years of the new régime to bring this about, and the process has continued, manifesting itself nowadays in the formation of patriotic societies of the most blackguardly kind.

Ise has often been described as the Mecca of Japan, and was always a place for pious pilgrimages. Kaempfer (1690) describes a pilgrimage thither as a certificate of patriotism, and says that the Japanese are all supposed to make it at least once in their life-time, though the greater part were content with the purchase of a little prayer-charm in a box brought by somebody else instead of going themselves. He describes the Shrine as "a sorry low building of wood, covered with a flattish thatched roof." In the twentieth century the idea that a pilgrimage is the duty of every Japanese has been greatly encouraged, and Railway Ministers have expressed regret that they could not see their way to giving cheap or even free tickets to young people. Curiously enough, this patriotic pilgrimage to Ise is said to have had its origin in the Shrine authorities, in order to relieve their poverty, starting the idea in sheer imitation of the pilgrimages which bring so much profit to Buddhist temples. Kaempfer speaks of the insistence on "purity", especially sexual abstinence, in the pilgrims, but the pious pilgrim, full of virtue, needs some relaxation after he has performed his duty, and the town of Yamada, close to the Shrine, is somewhat notorious for its liberal provision thereof.

Official shrine-visiting has greatly increased. Ministers of State on their appointment, and Ambassadors at their setting forth and at their returning again, always pay a visit to Ise "to announce the fact to the Sun Goddess and to the Imperial Ancestors." The Emperor himself goes on very important occasions, such as a victory in war, to make a similar announcement.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Special honour is paid to the Meiji Tenno, who, at the age of fifteen, was "restored" in 1868, and it is the accepted convention to regard him as a miracle of wisdom. It is possible that once or twice he may have exercised his choice in deciding between one adviser and another, and if he did, he was lucky enough to choose rightly. But the Emperors of Japan have always been so entirely "constitutional" that it is impossible to say positively whether Meiji's wisdom ever extended to a positive expression of opinion, or whether it lay in a sapient acquiescence in the advice of his ministers. His son and grandson are more than ever God Incarnate, yet the fact that Meiji is specially glorified may be by transference to him of the virtues of the distinguished men who guided the country through the difficult process of sloughing its mediævalism. The dogma that Meiji was a very great Emperor indeed is an acknowledgement that he was attended by wiser counsellors than his descendants have been rather than a claim that the manifestations of God vary in intelligence; still less is it a confession of the patent fact that those descendants are not remarkable for intellectual capacity.

At Meiji's death in 1912, he was buried in the traditional place at Momoyama, not far from Kyoto, where there are many tumuli of past Emperors, overgrown with clumps of trees, like the mounds which one sees here and there on the English countryside. For Meiji a specially fine site was chosen, and an enormous tumulus of large grey pebbles was raised over the grave. The avenue leading from the outer gate is now so well grown that the spectator can get only a glimpse of the tumulus, which itself will, when time has done its work, become a clump of trees like the rest. Meanwhile, those who climb up the magnificent flight of steps from the plain below have for their reward a little glimpse of the

THE NEW SHINTO

grave seen between the beautiful trees which yearly grow more solemn and mysterious.*

This tomb is a great place of pilgrimage, but much more so is the Meiji Shrine, on the outskirts of the capital. Here is a newly manufactured Mecca, to which the young men of Japan have been officially exhorted to make their pilgrimage. There is a large Young Men's Hall, for their entertainment on this pious mission, and in the spacious grounds is also a sports stadium, where the spirits of the Emperor Meiji and the Sun Goddess look down upon the manly prowess of their people. The Shrine is so near the capital, and the grounds are so beautifully kept, that there is a constant stream of visitors who respectfully bow before the place where the Great Emperor is deified.

There are other important shrines and many thousands of smaller ones. The Grand Shrine of Idzumo, generally referred to as Taisha and the centre of an important cult, is historically almost as important as Ise. Indeed, it might be said that if the Japanese believed their own legends, it would be a great deal more important, being the place where the spiritual headship of the country was established even before Jimmu Tenno, the First Emperor.† But though Japan was not a united empire for a thousand years later than the orthodox historians pretend, the old divisions so completely disappeared that in documented times there has been no need to maintain the fiction of the spiritual lordship of Onamochi. His shrine is to this day more impressive than that at Ise, but it is not to-day the Mecca of Japan, even in the month when the eight hundred thousand deities are in residence.

An important shrine is that deifying Kusunoki Masashige,

* Ever watchful for opportunities of increasing the sacredness of such places, the authorities have this year (1938) prohibited all photographing of the Ise Shrine and the Meiji Tomb.

† See page 50.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

popularly known as the Loyal Nanko.* After his last defeat, he, with seventy-two warriors—all that were left of his army—disembowelled themselves in the approved fashion—which, especially when done *en masse*, is one of the surest passports to fame. The shrine is situated in Kobe and was for many years sadly neglected; but with the Restoration in 1868 the fame of the Loyal Nanko became greatly enhanced, and in the 1920's a million yen were spent on improving the shrine, with results impressive to the eye, though not nearly so impressive as the sum spent. That, however, is a common feature of patriotic efforts. To the Nanko Shrine come military officers in considerable number, especially on festival days, the example of one so loyal as Masashige being sufficiently rare to warrant a pilgrimage on the part of all who would make it known that they dedicated their swords with equal devotion to the divine Emperor.

Of greater military importance and of some political significance is the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. Here are honoured all those, whether of the army or the navy, who have died in the service of the Emperor. Here on the anniversaries of great modern victories large concourses assemble to worship, and this adds especially to the glory of the Emperor Meiji, for it is always emphasised that it was by his imperial virtue that every victory was won.†

To the Yasukuni Shrine more than to any other students were expected to resort on ceremonial days, and here constitutional guarantees and military despotism came into direct conflict. The students of the Catholic University had

* See page 101.

† When General Mackensen overran Servia and Roumania, his message described his victory as being due to the military virtue of the Kaiser, very much in the Japanese manner. In 1938 Yasukuni had some millions of visitors in the week devoted to the deification of the first 10,000 Japanese dead in the wanton attack on China.

THE NEW SHINTO

been in the habit of absenting themselves from the worship of dead warriors. But after the capture of Manchuria in 1931, the army was no longer inclined to any toleration, and intimated that the Catholic University students must not neglect their loyal duty any longer. They were not content with leaving it to the individual students, but insisted on mass worship. At length the matter was referred to the Vatican, and as Japan keeps an envoy there,* this gentleman was able to obtain a pronouncement that the Vatican would accept the assurances of the Japanese Government that the shrine-visiting was merely an act of respect and loyalty, and did not have any religious implications. The Instructions of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, issued on May 25, 1936, read thus:

With regard to the actions whereby Japanese manifest their love of country, these points are to be noted. There is question here of those acts which, though originating in non-Christian religious sources, are not intrinsically evil but of themselves indifferent; neither are they commanded as a profession of a religion but only as civil acts for the manifestation and encouragement of patriotism, with all intention removed of forcing either Catholics or non-Catholics to signify adhesion to religions from which these rites have sprung.

This has been explicitly declared several times by the authorities in the Japanese Empire relying on the principle of religious freedom and on that distinction, already made and promulgated by the Japanese Government, between loyalty to National Shinto (at national shrines) and the religious cult of Shintoism. Indeed, the shrines or monuments set aside for this civil ceremony are under governmental administration differing from those serving for purely religious ceremonies. To the question asked by the Archbishop of Tokyo (September 22nd, 1932) of the Ministry of

* There are, of course, good Catholic families in Japan, but it is commonly believed that it is by official instruction that certain Japanese become Catholics, Freemasons, or what not, as a means of gathering information.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Education, whether "it can be held with certainty that the reasons for which the attendance of students of schools is required at these acts be reasons of patriotism and not of religion," the Minister of Education replied, "The visit to the national Shrines or Jinja is demanded of the students of higher schools and of the pupils of middle and primary schools for reasons which concern the programme of education. In actual fact, the salutation demanded of the Students of higher schools and of the pupils of middle and primary schools has no other purpose than to manifest visibly their sentiments of fidelity to, and love of, country."

The laws themselves, which concern public education, confirm this merely civil purpose, as is evident from the law made on August 3rd of the 32nd year of Meiji (1899), forbidding the imparting of religious instruction or the conducting of religious ceremonies in public schools and also in those schools which are subject to the laws and orders relating to discipline and the programme of studies. It can be legitimately inferred from this that the ceremonies at the Shrines, ordered for students by the authorities, are not of a religious nature.

The same seems to hold true concerning the public ceremonies held at the National Shrines on stated days under the encouragement and in the presence of the authorities; for, the same authorities on more than one occasion both directly and indirectly affirmed this to be their mind, and assuredly this is the widely held conviction of cultured persons in the Japanese Empire and of those persons who have profoundly studied the customs and mind of the Japanese. . . .

This Sacred Congregation, having given careful thought to all aspects of this important question, having consulted men versed in these matters, having been mindful of the evolution of time and customs, having considered the opinion of the Council of Nagasaki convened in 1890 . . . after mature deliberation in a solemn gathering of Their Eminences the Cardinals of the Sacred Council for the propagation of the Christian name, on the 18th of May of this year, decided to impart the following norms of action:

I. The Ordinaries in the territories of the Japanese Empire shall instruct the faithful that, to the ceremonies which are held at the Jinja (National Shrines) administered civilly by the Government,

THE NEW SHINTO

there is attributed by the civil authorities (as is evident from the various declarations) and by the common estimation of cultured persons a mere signification of patriotism, namely, a meaning of filial reverence toward the Imperial Family and to the heroes of the country; therefore, since ceremonies of this kind are endowed with a purely civil value, it is lawful for Catholics to join in them and act in accord with the other citizens after having made known their intentions, if this be necessary for the removal of any false interpretations of their acts. . . .

So much for the Roman view. A few of the Protestant missionaries take the line that to them the ceremonies, so far from being religious, are an empty hocus-pocus, so why not perform them for the sake of peace and quietness? Good-natured officials in ancient Rome tried to persuade the early Christians that the acknowledgement of the Emperor's divinity was a mere form and meant nothing; but Christians in those days were less easily convinced and less careful of their comfort. *Vicisti Amaterasu!*

So far as the Catholic University was concerned, the situation admittedly had its difficulties. In high schools and universities there is compulsory military training. Formerly this was more or less perfunctory, being conducted by old non-commissioned officers. The army, which on every possible occasion identifies itself with the worship of the Emperor and arrogates to itself the right to promote and regulate that worship, was not satisfied with the school training, the course in which was accepted as a substitute for conscription, and, instead of the old sergeants, appointed officers, responsible to the General Staff, for this task. On the Catholic University showing signs of imperfect obedience to military behests, it was informed that if it did not come to heel, its military instructors would be withdrawn and its students conscribed.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Such is the manner in which the army maintains the constitutional guarantee that all the Emperor's subjects shall enjoy religious freedom. If the shrine-visiting were as free from religious character as the officials pretend, there would be no object in enforcing it. So, for the sake of peace and quietness, the Christians make Naaman's compromise: When I bow myself in the House of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing. To this sad pass has Japan reduced Christendom by a little adroit lying, a bland declaration that black is white.

Other shrines receive varying degrees of honour, and the status of Shinto priests is gradually raised. Now and then an addition is made to the list of shrines which the Government has under its direct care, and the statistical decrease in the number of lower grade shrines is mainly due to their being grouped together for putting under competent management.

The displays of captured artillery shown at all the larger shrines and even at some of the smaller ones are not the only visible connection between Shinto and conquest. The shrine has become a symbol of Japanese victory overseas. This is particularly marked in the colonial possessions that Japan has added to her empire, Formosa and Korea, in which the principal shrines are called respectively the Taiwan Jinja and the Chosen Jinja—Taiwan and Chosen being the Japonised forms of the Chinese names of these places. These new symbols of conquest are very beautiful structures, kept by tradition within the bounds of a certain simplicity, but otherwise elaborated and ornamented in every way that fancy, untrammelled by financial exigencies, could suggest. Hardly less magnificent are the subsidiary shrines, the most important of which in Formosa is that deifying Prince Kitashirakawa, nearly related to the Throne, who died of malaria on the Formosan campaign at the time of the war with China.

THE NEW SHINTO

Foreign visitors to Formosa, if they are of no consequence, generally find that the difficulties of travel are such as to make it not worth while. Formerly the restrictions were much less severe, but there is an unwillingness now to permit any independent travel. The tourist of to-day, therefore, finds travel either unduly difficult or almost too easy, the favoured ones being accompanied everywhere by a pleasant minor official. The first duty of this guide, philosopher and friend is to take the visitor to the shrine at every place provided with one, and if the visitor is sufficiently complaisant to bow to the shrine, so much the better. Shinto has become such a morbid growth that these little emollients to its sensitiveness are prized. Compulsory shrine-visiting has been carried to greater lengths overseas than at home, and some missionaries have retired from both the Formosan and Korean fields in consequence.

Shrines have, of course, marked the conquering path of the Sun Goddess in Manchuria. The problem there is how to bring the Throne (which was manufactured in Osaka) within the range of the divine descent. The Emperor of Manchukuo is an authentic Emperor of China, but a mere upstart compared with the representative of the Sacred Line "unbroken from ages eternal." He has no heir, however, and perhaps the easiest way out of the difficulty will be for him to adopt a scion of the Japanese Imperial House, or, like the Emperor of Korea, ask the Emperor of Japan to take over the sovereignty. In Korea there was also a petition of notables for direct Japanese rule; and unless the inhabitants of Manchuria become much more appreciative of the blessings under which they live than they are at present, there may be a similar petition there. A change must come when a monarch in frail health and with no hope of heirs ceases to occupy the throne effectively; and when it comes it will be for the greater

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

glory of the Sun Goddess. In June 1938 the Japanese Government sanctioned the construction of a Kwantung Jinja—a National Shrine proclaiming that the former “leased territory” is definitely Japanese. The question whether the leased territory is part of Manchukuo was in any case only an academic one. The only question now is how long it will be before National Shrines arise in Hsinking and the provincial capitals of Manchukuo.

When the Japanese invaders withdrew their troops from Shanghai in 1932, they did two things unprovided for in any treaty and full of menace for the future. First, they built a huge fortified barrack adjoining Hongkew Park, which they modestly called the Landing Party's Headquarters. Secondly, opposite to this, they built a handsome Shinto shrine. The shrine was, in the traditional manner, constructed of unpainted and unvarnished wood. With a tin of kerosene and a match one could reduce it to ashes in a few minutes. But, much more than the fortifications which overlook it, it represents the forward movement of Japanese imperialism. Here is the Sun Goddess treading westward. In five years more she came in clouds and thunder for further conquest. It is not probable that in any part of China, any more than in Formosa, Korea, or Manchuria, will Japanese settle in numbers sufficient to relieve the congestion of population which is made the excuse for all these extensions, but if military ambitions are fulfilled other shrines will spring up throughout China to demonstrate the supremacy of the Sun Goddess, and the Chinese will doubtless wonder when they see the Japanese conducting their Christian friends to them and showing them how to bow the head to the Great Ancestress of the Imperial House.

Characteristic of the cult of loyalty to a divine Emperor

THE NEW SHINTO

are the innumerable patriotic societies, a few of which are respectable, though the majority are far otherwise. And here we have a strange illustration of the need for a fanatical faith if mountains are to be moved. Mr. Tokonami, an able and high-minded bureaucrat (who died in 1935), laboured abundantly to promote loyalty. He was himself, in all probability, of a sceptical mind, like the majority of well-educated Japanese. Quite rationally he regarded a staunch loyalty to the Throne as a source of national strength, but he had too strict an intellectual integrity to lend himself to preaching superstitious doctrines in which he did not believe or to assume an emotional fanaticism which he did not feel. In a country where the whole national momentum is identified with superstition and founded on fraud, his efforts, though well conceived and skilfully executed, were too honest to succeed. One was his founding of the Kokusuikai—of which the nearest translation is the “National Essence Society.”

To explain this it is necessary, at the risk of being tiresome, to make a brief excursion into history. During the Tokugawa Shogunate (1600–1868) it was the rule that the Daimyos must pass every alternate year at Yedo (now Tokyo) and keep their families there as hostages. Ieyasu, the first Shogun of the Tokugawa dynasty, whose own loyalty was never allowed to conflict with his interest, naturally had little belief in that of others, and he adopted this cumbersome device in order to keep an eye on his nobles and to enable his spies to investigate the administration of their fiefs. The journeys from the more distant provinces took weeks, the Daimyos taking with them quite an army of bearers and armed men. The presence of these in the capital for the greater part of the year naturally led to many quarrels, and there came into being as a counterpoise an

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

organisation of city toughs, called Otokodate, sometimes described as "a sort of low-class samurai." The leaders of the Otokodate undertook duties to which nobody had been appointed, especially the settling of the quarrels of the Daimyos' retainers between themselves and with the townspeople. It was a couple of generations since they found their occupation gone, but a good deal of gangster spirit remained, and they were called *Kyokaku*, which, according to the dictionary, means "chivalrous persons," but is sometimes rendered "dare-to-dies." Most of them had become contractors' men, and they were regarded as a formidable lot.

Mr. Tokonami conceived the bright idea of turning them into a patriotic society, and some of his friends and subordinates rather precipitately called them together. Mr. Tokonami, who was Minister for Home Affairs at the time (1918), was rather embarrassed, especially when he realised what sort of men they really were. But the thing had gone too far to draw back. They were duly formed into the Kokusuikai, with a retired General as President, and, besides the usual profession of loyalty, they were specifically devoted to the excellent cause of maintaining law and order. As it was a period when labour troubles were in the air and strikes were popular, the Kokusuikai thought that they would serve law and order and cover themselves with glory if they dispersed strikers and knocked them about a bit. But they proved to be a degenerate lot even for "low-class samurai," and got the worst of two or three encounters, after which the police refused their aid in settling disputes; and though they made a brave show among the marchers at the Imperial Wedding and on a few other auspicious occasions, they never counted for very much.

A brighter idea of Mr. Tokonami's was to improve and

THE NEW SHINTO

affiliate the Young Men's Associations which existed in most of the villages. The associations were, on the whole, excellent things. The members would turn out to a fire or a flood, and perform communal works generally. At the *matsuri*, when they helped bear the palanquin in which the local god took his annual perambulation, their conduct was not always so edifying, as this was a time for paying off old grudges, a favourite device being for the god to cause the heavy bearing-pole of the palanquin to drive right through the house of any unpopular person. The bearers, of course, disclaimed responsibility. It may be that Shinto on these occasions sometimes conveyed a moral lesson.

Mr. Tokonami had thought it would be a good thing to affiliate all these associations, give them a recognised status, and as far as possible uniform rules. All this was taken well enough, though not with enthusiasm; but when it was proposed that the associations should all contribute towards the cost of the Young Men's Hall, adjoining the Meiji Shrine, as this, by providing lodging, would facilitate the performance of the sacred duty of visiting the shrine, there was loud discontent. Officialising the associations was all very well, but the young men had very little money, and they made no secret of the fact that they were unwilling to pay. So Mr. Tokonami's bright idea fell rather flat. He did not bang the drum loudly enough. It needs the unscrupulousness or complete insincerity and the energy of egocentric patriotism to carry such a project through to success.

Nor did any remarkable success attend the same Minister's efforts to increase the leaven of patriotism in popular entertainments. He made special appeals to the reciters of *naniwabushi* stories to lay stress on patriotic themes. Often enough, indeed, the stories were of romantic loyalty, as many English novels are. If the English novelists were exhorted

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

by the Home Secretary to emphasise loyalty in their stories, the reaction would probably be startling. The *naniwabushi* reciters took the advice quite politely, but their first consideration was their own popularity, and remained so.

Patriotic societies vary in quality from the Kokuhonsha, formed by Baron Hiranuma but later dissolved, to mere gangs of ruffians. Some, like the Great Asia Society, declare unequivocally for Japan's empire of Asia; others merely have a resounding name that gives an excuse for strutting and boasting. One of the most notorious is the Black Dragon Society, originally anti-Russian. Some Japanese prefer to call it, in English, the Amur Society, but in more recent years it has not confined its interests to the North Manchurian border, but promotes patriotism in its least estimable aspects wherever they manifest themselves. The Roninkai hardly deserves the name of a society at all, but is very numerous and influential. It is more of a party, looking to Toyama Mitsuru as its head. This man Toyama is a character such as hardly any country but Japan could produce and such as no other country would honour. He appears never to have done anything notable in his life and is lacking in any mental attainment or cultural quality. His favourite boast is that when he has made up his mind to anything, he sets no value on his life in prosecuting his resolve. In justice to him it should be said that this boast appears much oftener on the lips of his followers than on his own. Years ago he used his influence to encourage espionage in China, and sent some of his followers to their deaths, their heroism by some strange legerdemain being added to his own glory. He may care nothing for his life, but in the many panegyrics written on him it is impossible to find any instance of his putting it in jeopardy. His exploits in the persecution of two of Japan's

THE NEW SHINTO

finest scholars would have earned him disgrace in any country where decent feeling had a chance to make itself felt.*

Perhaps it was his own idea to call his followers Ronin. The Ronin, under the feudal system, was a masterless man, a soldier out of a job, and the word had romantic connotations. More often than not Toyama's followers were called China Ronin, because as spies and bullies in China they have been engaged for many years in paving the way for Japanese conquest there. What part these Ronin have played in the demoralisation of China by morphia it would be hazardous to guess. Such traffic naturally does not seek publicity, and no specific value attaches to the fact that Uchida Ryohei, a follower and colleague of Toyama, published for some months an *Asian Review* (in English) in which Britain was reviled in unmeasured terms, especially as the purveyor of opium to China, at the very time when Japan was most active in creating this new trade in morphia, which proved much more pernicious than opium, the prohibition of which made the substitution of concentrated derivatives easy.†

Often the same leaders were concerned in the promotion of new societies, this being in accordance with Japanese custom, as witnessed conspicuously in the case of the political parties, where a considerable accession of membership or the adoption of a new line of policy is made the occasion for a change of name. The Black Dragons were associated with the Ronin, and the Seisanto (Production Society) followed, with a fresh accession of activity. The rather curious name suggests an economic outlook, and may be due to the fact that those who sought national glory in the subjugation of

* See pp. 141-143, and also pp. 171-172.

† At this period also an American lady Miss Ellen La Motte published books bitterly attacking England as the great opium monopolist, and either avoiding mention of Japan or deprecating charges against that country as baseless slander.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

China recommended their cause not only as patriotic but as calculated also to heal all the economic troubles of the Japanese people. It may, however, possibly have some connection with the High August Producing Wondrous Deity and the Divine Producing Wondrous Deity—those shadowy myths of the Shinto creation. The formation of the Seisanto marked an increase in the menace which patriotism held for all who hated violence and obscurantism.

As time went on, more and more patriotism was required to maintain the illusion that this sentiment kept Japan foremost among the nations and constituted her peculiar glory. Where all was not well, it could only be because somebody's patriotism was at fault. So patriotism ran amok, the Katsumeidan (Blood Brotherhood) gloried in the murder of statesmen and financiers, the Shimpeitai (God's Soldiers) planned massacre on a large scale, and a military group murdered statesmen by wholesale on February 26, 1936.

The late Professor Basil Hall Chamberlain published in 1912 an essay entitled *The Invention of a New Religion*, in which he describes how the cult of loyalty to a divine Emperor was created for the purposes of national solidarity. Speaking of the pretence that the Sovereign in Japan had always been as the loving father of his faithful subjects, he points out that in that very reign there had been two risings, one to set up another Emperor and the other to set up a republic. Actually there had been at least four rebellions, the Saga Rebellion in 1874, the Higo Rebellion in 1876, the Satsuma Rebellion in 1877, and the Saitama Rebellion in 1884—and there were other conspiracies and risings nipped in the bud too early for them to be dignified by the name of rebellion. They are all belittled by Japanese writers, who never mention republican aspirations, but history in Japan is not for instruction but for edification, and may be altered in

any way that makes it more acceptable to the ruling class. If any of the rebellions was for the purpose of putting on the throne some other scion of the imperial line instead of Meiji, discretion would forbid its mention, though it would have plenty of precedents, and a few years ago there were very persistent rumours of a military conspiracy to replace the present Emperor with his brother Chichibu, who certainly has a greater gift of popularity (if that matters) than the present occupant of the throne. A large number of officers were known to have been subjected to extraordinary military discipline, and Chichibu himself, who had been very conspicuous at public functions and sporting events, was not "in the news" for several months. If there really was a conspiracy, the secret was well kept so far as the printed word was concerned.

In a letter to Sir Ernest Satow, W. G. Aston describes a military revolt he had just witnessed in Tokyo. The rebels on that occasion were, of course, all men who remembered the old régime. They only remembered it as it was when the iron rule of the Shogunate kept everything so strictly in order that it was not even necessary to mount guard over the person of the Emperor in order to rule in his name; but there was the old tradition that whoever held the Emperor ruled the land, and now that the heavy hand of the Shogun was removed, the idea revived. Aston describes how the rebel soldiers attempted to seize the person of the Emperor but were repulsed by the Palace guards.

At a time like the present, when there is a great competition in patriotism, there is naturally a demand for a return to ancient ways, and the men who organised the massacre of statesmen on February 26, 1936, not only seized the Metropolitan Police Headquarters and the principal Government offices, but had the Palace at their discretion also. A couple

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

of generations of intensive inculcation of the doctrine of the divinity of the Emperor, however, made a difference: their hearts failed them and their plans collapsed. There were senior men behind them who would have been bold and unscrupulous enough; but they were not bold enough to appear at the head of the conspiracy until its success was certain; and so the *coup d'état* failed through its instrument being overcome by the superstition which they intended to turn to their own uses. In all probability they had no wish to perform the old trick of deposing the Emperor in favour of the infant Crown Prince who had arrived on the scene since the Chichibu conspiracy. The selection of victims for murder was a sufficiently plain indication that they merely wished to remove from places of influence about the Throne men who had both the power and the will to resist the headlong militarism which was determined to control the destinies of the country. The militarists did in fact take charge. They sacrificed their instruments but in other ways behaved as though the revolt had been completely successful.

To base the national polity upon Shinto was to sow a seed which must bear evil fruit. The legends which it related were without dignity; the events that they described had no moral significance; patriotic actions had no ethical bounds, and, however criminal in themselves, were admired so long as they appeared to serve an imperial purpose. The murder of the Queen of Korea, encompassed by Viscount Miura in 1895, foul and inexcusable as it was, raised Miura to such heights of fame that he passed thereafter not merely as a patriot but as a political oracle, and used to send for Ministers of State to come to his villa and listen to his advice on current affairs—summonses which they always meekly obeyed—while of his two chief agents in the murder, one became Minister for War, the other Minister of Home Affairs, and

both wore patriotic haloes. But the fruit was not recognised as evil—and in that fact its chief malignity lay.

As the pace of the patriotic cult accelerated, political murder became more common, and it was noticed that it was the best and not the worst of the men in high places who were murdered; but the murderers always got off with an inadequate sentence, much of which was remitted, and the liberated murderer was always lionised in the Press. To murder a Socialist was an act of virtue, for it was ridding the State of an enemy, and nobody in Japan has ever been punished severely for this class of crime, the murderer often escaping all penalty. A Minister for Justice confessed that he found great difficulty in regarding as punishable a crime in extenuation of which the culprit pleaded a patriotic motive. This attitude was faithfully reflected by the Courts. A notable example was that of Captain Amakasu, who in 1923 visited in his prison cell Osugi Sakae, Japan's most eminent Socialist, and strangled him there. He then visited in turn the cells in which Osugi's wife and their adopted child were confined, and strangled them also. The Press hailed him as a national hero. He was invited in Court to deny the strangling of the child, but did not, so he was given a very inadequate term of imprisonment, only a short part of which he served before being sent to Manchuria on special duty. He played his part in the taking of Manchuria in 1931, and in 1938 was vice-chairman of a Manchukuoan Mission of Peace and Amity which toured Europe and America.

The Japanese governing class became sorely perplexed by the fact that they were themselves liable to be the victims of the more murderous ebullitions of patriotism. There was a half-hearted attempt to restrain the more objectionable manifestations by passing a Law for the Control of Bullies and Ruffians, which evidently pointed to some of those who made

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

their patriotism the excuse for violence and outrage. But this law was totally ineffectual. It was the army which inadvertently pointed the way to a possible remedy.

The younger officers were very much inclined to regard themselves as the ordained custodians and protectors of loyalty. They were also full of generous indignation at the sufferings of the poor, and they argued that if they could fare hardly and study their profession, there was no reason why merchants, lawyers, bankers, manufacturers and others should revel in wealth and luxury. Without giving their doctrines so definite a name, they conceived a sort of Imperialist Socialism. So, when some civilian Socialists proclaimed themselves Imperialists as well, it put the police in a quandary. The Peace Preservation Law had prescribed the death penalty for those who would change the system of government or even the principle of private property, but it was always understood that this was a law for dealing with indubitable Bolsheviks. Indeed, this was the excuse that the Government offered for passing it (in 1928).^{*} But if Socialists could pretend to be patriots, professed patriots might be Socialists in disguise.

Gangs of patriotic bullies continued to commit outrages, sometimes breaking up the furniture of a statesman who showed signs of liberal thought; and the police would put them through an examination that started on the supposition that they were really promoters of dangerous radical doctrines. The device proved somewhat disappointing, however, because of the enormous kudos that the ruffians gained among their fellows. The patriotism of which the Japanese

^{*} The death penalty has not actually been imposed for "thought" without action. Japanese judges are reluctant to use the rope. Besides, the terrors of police examination are far worse than death—which sometimes brings merciful oblivion to the examinee.

are so proud has its penalties which must be put up with, but an overworked police is sorely perplexed when two or three hundred notables at a time in Tokyo demand special protection from the patriots.

The army, though it pretends to be the great arbiter in matters of patriotism, contains a large number of individualists suffering from an enlarged ego. It is, in fact, as full of jealousy and petty intrigue as a girls' boarding school, and the highest ranks of officers are often more self-seeking than the lower ranks. As against the civilian population it is united, but in no other way. Generally it manages to hide its dissensions from the world, but sometimes, as on August 12, 1935, its differences become news. There is a triumvirate which rules the army—the Minister for War, the Chief of the General Staff and the Director-General of Military Education. In order to reduce the number and to stifle criticism, an Imperial Prince was put in as Chief of the General Staff, and when the comparatively moderate General Hayashi succeeded the fire-eating General Araki as Minister for War, he contrived to get a man of his own way of thought as Director-General of Military Education. General Nagata, chief of the Military Affairs Bureau in the War Office, had done most of the go-between work in getting the previous Director-General to resign, and this caused a solemn fanatic, a certain Colonel Aizawa, to think that the army was going to the dogs. His procedure was characteristic, though it went to unusual extremities. He set off for the Grand Shrine at Ise, where he reported to the Sun Goddess that he was going to save the situation; he bought a charm there, and sent it to his family; and then, returning to Tokyo, he invaded the office of General Nagata, and, without even giving him a sporting chance, stabbed him to death with a short sword.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

So convinced was Colonel Aizawa of the righteousness of his cause (for he no doubt took the Sun Goddess's silence for assent) that he made preparations to take up a post in Formosa, to which he had been appointed, and was quite astonished when he was arrested instead. Nobody in the army denied that, whatever might be the obligations to patriotism, the Colonel had gone too far. After all, discipline was necessary, and a general is, *ex officio*, more patriotic than a regimental officer. So Aizawa paid for his demonstration with his life, but he rather than Nagata is regarded as a hero. (Statements have been published in the Press that he was, after all, let off; it is not a matter of great moment.)

Japan had for many centuries been ruled by soldiers, and these military dictators treated their sovereigns worse than the monarchs of any other country have been treated, even the formal respect often shown being little more than an insolent mockery. The holder of the Three Sacred Treasures was Emperor and representative of the sacred line of the Sun Goddess, but the sword ruled—not the sword wrapped up and hidden in the Imperial Household Shrine, but the sword of the warrior, kept sharp as a razor and ready for murder at any time. It was therefore regarded as proper that, when the Emperor was “restored” in 1868, and made supreme commander of the forces, he should still be ruled by the army. So it was ordained that the Minister for War and the Chief of the General Staff might interview the Emperor and tender him advice at any time, this advice apparently ranking equally with that of the Premier. Indeed, it was generally assumed that the military advice took precedence, as it concerned the safety of the country.

And to the military mind this seemed eminently reasonable. For two hundred and fifty years the Generalissimos ruling

THE NEW SHINTO

the Empire had not even sought imperial sanction for their acts; and now all that the army had to do was to notify the Emperor of the course it was about to take—or had already taken. Not that the army and navy interfered in the details of administration, but they made their own budgets and the Cabinet had to agree to them.

The Minister for the Navy and the Chief of the Naval General Staff had similar rights to those of the Minister for War and the Chief of the General Staff; but the navy was habitually more loyal and reasonable than the army. It had no centuries of traditional arrogance behind it, but at its creation had been modelled on the pattern of the British Navy and may have taken something of the tone of the Silent Service. There were, of course, some fire-eaters in the navy, but the "big navy" men, though they were able to get some very large naval budgets passed, included men like Viscount Saito and Admiral Kato Tomosaburo, who were famous for their statesmanlike qualities, their reasonableness and moderation. It was always the army that was aggressive, and it was the propriety of the army's privilege of approaching the Throne that was always questioned by those who hoped for the development of democratic institutions in Japan.

There was a naval conference in London in 1930, attended by Admiral Takarabe, the Minister for the Navy, and during his absence from Japan, Mr. Hamaguchi, the Premier, held the portfolio for him—an unprecedented arrangement and one to which the army, in a similar situation, would never have consented. The conference was the last gasp of the effort made at Washington in 1922 to bring about naval disarmament. In its result it still further increased Japan's hegemony in North-eastern Asia by extending the quota to all classes of ships: but those who looked for the extension of the realm of the Sun Goddess all over Asia—or all over the

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

world, according to the degree of their enthusiasm—wanted ratios and quotas abolished altogether. When Admiral Takarabe, on his return stepped ashore, a young gentleman handed him a short sword wrapped in a napkin, as a sign that he should slit his belly after achieving such a disgrace. Much more significant was the resignation of Admiral Kato Kanji, Chief of the Navy General Staff, who blustered a great deal about the country's safety being jeopardised.

There is some suspicion that the trouble which started at Shanghai in January 1932 was the result of some harebrained naval officer endeavouring to restore prestige and to claim a share in the glory which the army was reaping in Manchuria. If so, it only afforded the army an excuse for committing its greatest outrage up to that date against China. But the army's preoccupation was still with the North—Manchuria and North China, and all the Russian territory east of Baikal, which they regard as necessary for their strategic defence. As a counterpoise to the army's Northward Ho! however, the navy had its Southward Ho!—though it was careful to explain that this movement was entirely cultural and economic, as though in contrast to the northward movement.

To the world at large, especially to the British Empire, the Japanese navy is a familiar and even friendly sight, while the army seems something strange and remote. In Japan, however, it is the army which attracts attention. It is more visible, and it advertises itself in an astonishing manner. The navy sails the seven seas and visits foreign ports, where it gets some idea of what other nations think and it tends to be cosmopolitan; but the army is the Nation, the guardian of the sacred Emperor who is supposed to command it, and it is always the army whose advice to the Throne determines national policy.

THE NEW SHINTO

Nevertheless, the more respectable service has been swept along on the tide of morbid nationalism. Japan's exploits in Manchuria in 1931-1932 were condemned by the League of Nations, as a reply to which she resigned from that body, which at once raised the question of the control of the Mandated Islands—the Marshalls and Carolines, which, until the Great War, had been owned by Germany, and the care of which was committed by the League to Japan. Admirals immediately declared very loudly that the islands were Japan's first line of defence; two or three foreign writers who "understood" Japan visited the islands under official auspices and wrote books to tell the world that they were not being used for any warlike purpose; and since then they have been as good as closed to external visitors, their administration being undertaken by the navy, based on Formosa.

The navy keeps a careful eye on French, Dutch and Portuguese possessions in the Far East, and Siam is inclined to say, like Little Red Ridinghood, "O Grandmama, what big eyes you have!" All these regions, including Malaya and the Philippines, are vastly more attractive to the Japanese than the bleak steppes of Manchuria and Mongolia, and, properly "protected", would offer brighter prospects of dominion. The Japanese newspapers from time to time inform their readers how anxious are the people in these desirable lands to learn Japanese and to acquire Japanese culture; but the navy has not yet learnt to be blatant like the army.

The men who arrogated to themselves a monopoly in patriotism were really bad cases of atavism—reversions to a lower type. Much more truly patriotic were those Japanese who took liberal views and tried to guide their country along a path which would have gained the respect of the world, and would, no doubt, have led to economic success as well. The effort of these liberals reached its climax when Hamaguchi

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

was Premier. His Government made a gallant fight for real constitutional government, and, in 1930, persuaded the navy to be reasonable, as already related. Almost it persuaded the army to be reasonable also. General Ugaki, the Minister for War at that time, had the qualities of a statesman and did not look for miracles. He was engaged on the very expensive task of mechanising the army, and as it appeared to be impossible to expect larger defence budgets from a Government fighting hard for economy, he agreed to a reduction of the army by four divisions, on condition that the military budget should not be reduced, all the money being needed for the new equipment. Ugaki was a man of such prestige in the army as well as of reputation for political qualities that he was able to silence opposition to this very necessary reform. But the men who, because their faith was founded on fiction, refused to face facts, had their revenge. When Ugaki was commanded by the Emperor to form a Cabinet at the beginning of 1937, his enemies in the Service saw to it that he was unable to get the necessary men together. Of this quality is the loyalty of the Japanese army, which professes to be at the orders of the Emperor alone.

Between these two events came another which, even more than the repeated assassinations for which "headstrong young officers" are always blamed, showed the moral depths to which the army will sink in order to maintain its political ascendancy. The old question had been asked once again whether it was expedient in a constitutionally governed country that the Chiefs of the Army and Navy General Staffs should have the right, without even the sanction and assent of the Cabinet, to seek an Imperial audience and advise the Throne on matters of national policy. The point was raised particularly in connection with Admiral Kato Kanji's attempt to render the London Naval Conference abortive and to

show his loyalty by demonstrating to the world that Japan's undertakings were not to be trusted—though perhaps in view of subsequent happenings, it is regrettable that Admiral Kato was not permitted to give this warning.

Dr. Minobe Tatsukichi, Japan's greatest authority on Constitutional Law, published an essay on the supremacy of the civil power, which, he argued, was superior to the military, despite these much-disputed privileges of the Chiefs of Staff. The civil power alone, Minobe said, had control over the public purse, to bind or to loose; and money, after all, was the deciding factor. The Emperor's acceptance of the advice of the Chief of the General Staff, Minobe argued, made that advice the will of the army (or the navy, as the case might be), but did not, like his acceptance of the advice of the Premier, make it the will of the State.

There was not a soldier learned enough to argue with Minobe, and his essay, at the time of its publication, received little comment. For a generation Minobe's authority in his particular studies had been undisputed, and three-quarters of the professors in Japan who taught constitutional law were Minobe's pupils. It was nearly five years before the army discovered a weapon which it could use against him. Then somebody pointed out that, in a learned work published twenty-five years earlier, Minobe, in describing how the State was constituted, defined the position of the Emperor as that of an organ of the State—that, at least, is as nearly as the somewhat vague Sinico-Japanese word can be rendered. Here was the chance that had been prayed for. The man who would exalt the civil power above the military was guilty of blasphemy. The descendant of the Sun Goddess, himself God incarnate, an organ! That loud patriot Toyama Mitsuru, whose ignorance was as encyclopædic as Minobe's learning, thundered against the putting of the ineffable into

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

words—and such words! The army took up the cry. The Minister for War, at first a little ashamed of such a dirty business, soon yielded to the clamour and even led the pack.

Minobe defended himself, but such is the terror in which a charge of being unpatriotic is held that there was not a man in Japan bold enough to come forward and defend him. Honours and decorations had to be sacrificed, his books—the work of a lifetime—were withdrawn from circulation, and every teacher and professor who had been his pupil lost his academic post. A word from the Emperor would have stopped the disgraceful business; but it is doubtful whether he ever heard of the commotion. While he was Regent, officials used to cut from the newspapers the articles which they considered suitable for him to read, and it is quite likely that the practice continues. The unhappy Sovereign, whether an “organ” or not, has less power to exercise his own will than the meanest of his subjects.

Abroad, comment on the affair merely pointed out the quaintness of the fault and the intensity of the loyalty which could make so much of it. The army took care not to refer to Minobe's interpretation of the Constitution as giving them an inferior status: they were simply out to break Minobe—and they broke him. Actually there was no better loyalist in Japan than Dr. Minobe, but loyalty counted for little with his enemies and learning for less. He described, of course, a conception of law that had little support in practice; but if he had described the Emperor as the Grand Mascot of the army, he would have found fact as dangerous as theory. Truth and intellectual integrity cannot exist in a State whose polity is founded on a pretence. Ignorance and blatancy win the day, and are praised by foreign observers, who, with a little polite encouragement, find it easy to believe that they are the virtues that they pretend to be.

THE NEW SHINTO

It has often been said, and with truth, that the loyalty which, in the feudal period, the samurai bore towards his liege lord, was, after the restoration of 1868, transferred to the Emperor. The idea of loyalty to the Sovereign had almost died out since the Ashikaga days of the fourteenth century, when there were rival emperors to be fought for. During the enforced peace of the Tokugawa Shogunate (1600-1868) the feudal lords kept their armed retainers at full strength, and there was a very diligent teaching of loyalty. But these feudal lords were not themselves trusted by the Shogun, for they had never shown themselves worthy of trust, and he kept them under a most elaborate system of control and espionage. During the civil wars the nobles changed sides with a frequency and venality which put in the shade those tergiversations of the Chinese warlords which, from 1913 to 1925, made their country's politics look absurd.

Though the samurai, during the Tokugawa period, kept up their martial ardour for the war that never came, their preparedness was not appreciated by the people to whom they were merely a heavy economic burden, and who admired their qualities only in the theatre. But to attain nobility was to abandon loyalty. It had even been the endeavour among the more astute among the noble families, during the civil wars, to have members on both sides, so that the influence of the winners could save the estates of the losers from confiscation. If this precaution for any reason could not be taken, there remained the more difficult and dangerous task of deserting to the winning side, if necessary, just in time.

The samurai were irked by peace, and they swaggered insufferably to keep up their prestige, but it was slipping from them. Of what profit was it for a company of warriors to prove their valour by surrounding some helpless foreigner and hacking him to pieces when the sequel was a bombard-

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

ment by artillery superior to their own? After the Restoration in 1868 a modernised army and a police force vested with extraordinary powers gave the samurai new openings in exchange for a position that was becoming both untenable and contemptible.

A new military legend had to be created to suit the new conditions. In order to make the new military service popular, the samurai were glorified, so that the ordinary man should appreciate the honour of being a conscript. With such masters of propaganda this was comparatively easy, and sometimes its very success had mournful results. Lafcadio Hearn and others have recorded instances of youths committing suicide through disappointment when they failed to pass the physical test and so could not become soldiers; but "you cannot fool all the people all the time," and the Japanese as a general rule are no more inclined to regimental service than are the people of other nations who conscribe their youth. Buddhist priests from time to time get into serious trouble for selling charms against conscription—not because they obtain money under false pretences but because they encourage such disloyal desires. Now that anybody may be called on to serve, they must all be samurai. "We are a nation of samurai: with us honour comes before every thing," said Mr. Sugimura at Geneva, when he promised to get the morphia trade suppressed. But alas! morphia follows the Japanese army and does more harm than its bullets. That too is a result of adopting as a national religion a code without moral content.

Bushido was probably invented mainly for foreign consumption. The word, most conveniently translated "The Way of the Warrior" (but equally susceptible to being called "the soldier's road"), is one which a Japanese scholar might have improvised at any time, and Sir George Sansom has

found an instance of it in eighteenth-century literature. It was not until 1900, however, that it found a place in a Japanese dictionary. Dr. Nitobe, a Japanese scholar who in his youth joined the Society of Friends and spent much talent in composing apologies for the Japanese army, wrote a little book in English called *Bushido*, through which the word was for many years far better known abroad than it was in Japan. Nitobe was a romantic soul and coloured Japanese militarism with the hues of European chivalry. Readers of Victorian historical romances are apt to get a mind-picture of mediæval times not much more realistic than a Christmas pantomime, but perhaps not departing quite so far from realities as the mental picture conceived by those who read *Bushido* without supplementing it with a course in Japanese history.

It is almost a point of honour with modern scholars to find eclecticism in Japan, and one of the best of them, Dr. Inoue Tetsujiro, says that *Bushido* originated in a combination of the best elements of Shinto, Confucianism and Buddhism. His own experience of it since he gave this opinion has been somewhat bitter.*

A word much more familiar in Japan than *Bushido* is *Kokutai*. This can be translated "national polity," but patriots declare that the word is untranslatable, its meaning ineffable. Japanese loyalty, similarly, is often declared to be a sentiment for the definition of which no words are adequate. A great convenience in the ineffable is that it enables the patriot to denounce whom he will. The ineffableness of Zen, a Japonised version of a Sinified yoga, has already been described. It is significant that these magical Japanese words should be laid claim to as distinguishing the morbid patriotism of the day, and should be closely associated with murder.

* See pages 141-143.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

The Japanese dilettante, Noguchi Yonejiro, better known in England and America as Yone Noguchi, wrote thus in his curiously tortured English just before the Imperial Enthronement in 1928:

They will surely ask me, saying: "How can you compromise the thought of Emperor-worship or ancestor-adoration with your modernism, supposing you have it? Your modernism might be a thing half-way or a medley fantasia at present; but some day you will reach the time when your thought is one same through the world. Then, I wonder how can you manage to mind up your traditional thought or superstition. Asking you straight out, how can your thought of Emperor-adoration or Ancestor-worship last under the light of modernism?" Japan was for many years in the past an enigma or incomprehensible allegory to the West, which, if it had beauty that distinguished itself, it was the beauty in grotesque arrangement; she was a country whom no Westerner could see through, a land unlike China who like a shopman changes her show-windows of the country.

Mr. Noguchi found the task of explaining Emperor-worship beyond him; he had to say something, so, like the frightened cuttlefish, he took refuge in an inky obscurity. Such trifling may be inoffensive as a social affectation, yet not wholly so, seeing that Noguchi, like Dr. Nitobe and the rest of the propagandists, must have his disparaging sneer at China. Noguchi's nonsense may be a very worthy treatment of the Emperor's divinity from the point of view of its essential absurdity, but it is insufficient when Kokutai has become a menace to civilisation.

The exaltation of the Polynesian legend is only a part of the falsification of history which the National Polity entails. It may be said that national histories are nowhere impeccable. An eminent English historian once set forth what could be said in favour of Richard the Third, and at the end declared

THE NEW SHINTO

that such labour was vain, for falsehood is mighty and will prevail. Under the Tudors Richard could have no friends. But as the Imperial idea has been increasingly inflated, it has been necessary to draw a veil over great tracts of Japanese history. Of Takauji, the first of the Ashikaga Shoguns, who supported the Northern Emperors against the Southern,* Murdoch wrote in 1910:

His memory has been blackened and blasted by ultraloyalist historians, and for two centuries it has been the target of obloquy and perfervid patriotic invective. Lately in certain quarters a reaction has set in, and he has actually been characterised as "one of Japan's greatest and noblest men." . . . [he was] brave in the field of battle, patient and tenacious in the face of disaster; generous, liberal, not vindictive, and highly accomplished.†

During these early years of the century of which and in which Murdoch wrote, historical criticism enjoyed a brief spell of liberty. Before the cloud of patriotic obscurantism entirely closed down Baron Nakajima wrote a historical essay in which he set forth Takauji's good qualities, and its publication in a magazine went quite unnoticed. The Baron was a scholar, but was eminent chiefly in commerce and politics. He had distinguished himself in ministerial posts, and in 1935 was Minister for Education, when some one who bore him a grudge disinterred the article on Takauji and reprinted it. The patriots gave tongue like a pack of hounds. Never could a man who panegyrised disloyalty remain in the Cabinet, and the storm continued, gathering strength, till he resigned. It was as though Mr. H. A. L. Fisher had been hounded out of office for praising Warwick the Kingmaker.

In the same year that Baron Nakajima was the victim of such a degraded patriotism, an order was given that hence-

* See above, pp. 101-102.

† Murdoch's *History of Japan*, vol. i, Asiatic Society of Japan, Tokyo.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

forth derogatory references to Emperors, however far back, must be expunged from Japanese literature. An exception was made in the case of those texts which had acquired a sort of semi-sacred character, an example named being the *Heike Monogatari*. Passages from this work are sometimes intoned to the accompaniment of the *biwa*, but the text is sufficiently old for it to be by no means easy to read, even by persons of good education. As history it is somewhat apocryphal, dealing with the triumph of the Minamoto over the Taira, and of some of the events of the time it is the only record. It represents the Emperors as being addressed in reverential terms, but it by no means bears out the modern fiction that this was accompanied by a genuine respect. The ex-Emperor Go Shirakawa is represented as saying, "There are four generations of Emperors now living at the same time, and since they are all deprived of any hand in the administration, there is nothing else for them to do but to pass their lives uselessly." And the author says, "It was most grievous to see that both the Law of Buddha and the Throne had quite lost their influence."

Go Shirakawa lived to see yet another Emperor, an infant, raised to the Throne in place of the one drowned at the Battle of Dan-no-ura. The *Heike Monogatari* maintains the correct attitude in describing the Imperial characters. Unhappy Emperors, who were practically State prisoners, are praised as the exemplars of virtues which may have been latent in them but which found no opportunity of development or exercise.

Those two storehouses of myth and makebelieve, the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*, are, of course, safe from the hands of patriotic violators, but perhaps it is fortunate that very few of the louder kind of patriot are capable of reading either. When these works were compiled, in the eighth century of

THE NEW SHINTO

our era, it was for the express purpose for providing written authority for the legend of divine descent, but it did not follow, according to the ideas of that time, that an Emperor was a sacred person who could do no wrong. The fratricidal strife in which an Emperor's sons would seize a bloodstained throne was comparable to the rivalries of the early Plantagenets, and when an Emperor was cruel and tyrannical, the scribe did not find it necessary to avoid mentioning it in plain words.

A European scholar has described the *Nihongi* as "the greatest literary fraud ever perpetrated." It hardly seems to have been that. The compilers simply had no conception of the truth, and wanted to make a fine book which should glorify the Yamato House. Had they foreseen the advent into this world of illusion of the literary critic, they might have been more careful not to contradict themselves or to make their chronology impossible. The fraud lies in the modern claim that the inventions and borrowings of these two books are sober history and in founding upon them the preposterous claim of divine descent. Such claims were made naïvely enough by primitive peoples, but now they are made in the face of all Christendom, so that the assent and acknowledgement of the world may be gained.

The fact that in these books Emperors display attributes which it would be derogatory to our planet to call "of the earth earthy" matters very little since nobody reads them; but the prohibition announced in 1935 means that, while for school children and conscripts emasculated but still miraculous stories are based on this authority, nothing in the way of criticism can be allowed, and throughout the whole record of Japan there must be a falsification of history and a bowdlerisation of romance *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*—God in this case being the Emperor.

CHAPTER VII

POPULAR VARIETIES OF SHINTO



A HEROINE of the Great War left us her testimony to the insufficiency of patriotism to satisfy the aspirations of the human heart; and it would give a very false impression of the Japanese to leave the reader to suppose that everything was swallowed up in the ridiculous synthetic religion which their rulers inculcate for political purposes. In part, the popular forms of Shinto are probably due to the interest which Motoori's enthusiasm aroused; and this awakened desire to find salvation through the native gods was further stimulated by the official patriotism created to meet the new conditions that Japan had to face when she abandoned her strict isolation; added to which, the Japanese are in no way inferior to the Athenians in their enthusiasm for anything new. Moreover, Motoori's dictum that moral teachings were for degraded people like the Chinese and not for the Japanese, who, being naturally good, did not need them, though flattering to national vanity, did not find general acceptance. The Japanese have a very large capacity for being pleased with themselves, but few are of such independent mind as to feel no need of spiritual guidance.

Dr. Kato Genchi gives a list of thirteen recognised Shinto sects which are "on the same footing as Buddhism or

POPULAR VARIETIES OF SHINTO

Christianity," which means that they come under the supervision of the Department of Education, and not of the Shrines Bureau. Seven of these, says Dr. Kato, came into existence in the Tokugawa period (1600-1868, but towards the end of it), and six in the Meiji period—that is, after 1868. Chamberlain mentions Remmonkyo, which is not on Kato's list, but has apparently faded out—or else changed its name. There are other sects which lack official recognition or to which the authorities will not give their countenance. One remarkable thing about these popular Shinto religions (generally referred to as Neo-Shinto) is the large part played by women in their foundation. Chamberlain mentions Tenrikyo and Remmonkyo as the creation of peasant women whose ignorance is better established than their sanity. Konotabi and Omotokyo had similar origins; and the founders of Kurozumikyō and Konkokyō were men of very humble origin.

Tenrikyo was endowed by its imaginative foundress with a Mother Goose mythology of its own; but that does not appear to be such an important element as faith-healing and a gospel of work and cheerfulness. The foundress, Nakayama Miki, was born in 1798, and spent the usual hard life of a small farmer's wife. She became inspired, and suffered a certain amount of persecution, but persevered until she gained many followers. It is recorded that, though not entirely untaught in childhood, she forgot all her schooling later—which very frequently happens in her station in life. But somehow she left behind a good deal of literature for the guidance of her followers. The *Divine Chronicle of the Muddy Ocean* may be quoted for a sample of its quality:

This world at the beginning was Muddy Ocean. There was no Mankind. Nothing but a vast ocean of mud, wherein were a Dragon and a Serpent. The Dragon had one head, one tail, and a straight line of body; and it was huge beyond imagination. The

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Serpent had twelve heads and three rapier-like tails; and it was huge beyond imagination. There were no Deities except what was seen in the two forms of a huge Dragon and a huge Serpent. These two Beings were called for their virtue "Sun" and "Moon". The Supreme Being, "Moon", being of male character, was called Kunitokotachi-no-Mikoto, the Spirit of Foundation. And "Sun", being of female character, was called Omotaru-no-Mikoto, the Spirit of Gravity.

We thus get introduced almost at the outset to strange deities like those of the *Kojiki*. There are also a number of psalms and homilies, and Eight Gods whose functions and limitations are the subject of speculation and discussion, but not, so far, of dissent and schism. There is some speculation regarding a Supreme Being (apart from the Moon), a God of Gods, but *more Japonico*, that subject is rather avoided. It cannot be altogether avoided, however, for, though the Tenrikyo appeals chiefly to country people, the generosity of its followers, who number over four million, has brought it wealth with the inevitable accompaniments of the cares of the world, speculative philosophy, and the deceitfulness of riches. Its headquarters are in the Nara district, and include a magnificent temple, seminaries, administrative buildings, and a library in which is housed a remarkable collection of books on religious topics from all over the world. Some of its leading men are brilliant scholars, and it now engages in foreign mission work.

Such developments point towards a Church Universal, but orthodox patriotism shows no enthusiasm for that, and is, indeed, rather jealously suspicious of any Neo-Shinto sect that tends to transcend the tribal boundaries. Japanese militarists are extremely fond of describing their aspirations, activities, and influence as "spiritual", but they look with no favour on spiritual conquests except such as bring new lands

POPULAR VARIETIES OF SHINTO

and peoples very definitely under the sway of the Sun Goddess and her imperial descendants.

When a sect's activities are looked upon with disfavour, troubles follow. It is usual, in charges against an ecclesiastic, as it was in mediæval Europe, to bring accusations of immorality, as people shrink from contact with such things though they may be entirely without foundation. Tenrikyo has been but moderately vexed with this sort of thing, but received a shock in 1937, when the Collector of Income Tax accused the chief priest of concealing his emoluments. In this case a settlement was reached without any disastrous loss of face.

Where there is sufficient devotion a very slender stock of theology is necessary, as may be seen in the case of Kurozumikyō. In other times and circumstances, Kurozumi might have been the founder of a Church Universal. He was a peasant, an attendant at a shrine in Bizen, and his devotion to the Sun Goddess was comparable with that of a mediæval European enthusiast to the Virgin Mary. Purity of life, diligence and honesty he devoted to the service of the goddess, and he sought spiritual inspiration and bodily health in physical inspiration while adoring the sun. When he died, in the middle of the nineteenth century, he had a considerable following, which has continued. Yet, apart from adoring Amaterasu as the Supreme Being, without whom was not anything made that was made, he is a true Shintoist, for he is without metaphysical or philosophic content. The problems of time and space, substance and spirit, good and evil, concern him not: he only teaches his followers to devote their lives to a passionate adoration like his own for a deity who has no attributes except that she bestows an ephemeral human vitality on her worshippers, who seek salvation by facing the sun and praying with deep inhalations. So far as he went, he

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

was a monotheist, but he did not go far. His followers are mainly concerned with health through deep breathing.

Strangely enough, one real attempt to make Shinto a universal faith and to raise it from its tribal character was sternly suppressed. The attempt was not made by its foundress, who was more completely illiterate than the foundress of Tenrikyo, and was decidedly more unsound in her intellect. Omotokyo, the Great Source Religion, was founded by a small farmer's wife, Deguchi Nao, and in this case, as in that of Tenrikyo, more learned followers agreed to claim the authority of an early and excessively shadowy god. Though illiterate, Mrs. Deguchi left behind a great quantity of "sacred writings," which were in part transcribed and interpreted by Mr. Asano Wasaburo for the benefit of the faithful. Whether anybody but Asano ever claimed to be able to read them nobody appears to know; and when he translated thus about 1915 a prophecy belonging to the year 1892, it was clear that the new religion made considerable demands on the faith of its followers:

The day is coming when the work of the Gods will be more and more manifest on earth. There will be war between Japan and China, and Japan will gain the victory. But Japan must not rest satisfied, for she will have to fight Russia. Here too the Gods will help her. But she must not rest content with her victory, for a war greater than any since the beginning of the world is coming.

The sect at this time was multiplying rapidly, and a very ornate temple was built on a little hill at Ayabe, a quiet country town in the western corner of Kyoto prefecture, where Deguchi Nao's inspiration was first manifested. There were branch temples everywhere, often in ordinary Japanese houses, and the adherents of the sect numbered over a million. About 1921 an apocalyptic enthusiasm swept over the sect.

POPULAR VARIETIES OF SHINTO

Long-haired enthusiasts were to be seen going about on horseback, the more noticeable because riding is rare except as a military exercise. There was to be a general destruction of the world, only Ayabe being preserved.

Some retired naval and military men of high rank had joined the sect, and it might have been supposed that these would give it a character above criticism, but this guarantee of respectable patriotism turned out to be ineffective. Strange stories got about: at secret meetings of the sect, it was said, the company raved in mass possession; there were stores of arms in the temples; there was a disloyal attitude towards the Imperial House. Men of Belial made fantastic accusations; and presently there was a general prosecution of the leaders. No very definite charges emerged, but a battalion of soldiers was sent to Ayabe to destroy the temple, which they did very thoroughly. Across a valley a very fine view of the tomb of the foundress was to be seen from the temple site, and this tomb was a tumulus so extraordinarily like that of the Meiji Tenno that it was inevitable that it should be demolished as well—it was an open claim to divinity. A prosecution of the leaders dragged on in the courts for years, but the sect was not proscribed, and the ordinary members went placidly on, though horsemen were no more seen and the apocalypse no more heard of. The high priest, who was a son-in-law of the foundress and a peasant by birth, established a new headquarters. There were intermittent alarums and excursions, and there was another general prosecution in 1936. There were the usual charges of priestly profligacy, and in 1937 the sect was proscribed. Some of its devotees were subject to much discomfort, prolonged detention, and ruinous expense, but martyrdom was avoided, and the proscription of what was now officially described as a quasi-religion, was meekly accepted.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Like Tenrikyo, Omotokyo sought authority in the elder gods, though its popularity lay in its being something new. Both religions alike shrink from the cold abstractions of monotheism, and avoid Amenominakanushi-no-Kami, the God of the Very Centre of the Universe; their foundresses found inspiration rather in Kunitokotachi-no-Mikoto, whose name suggests the Foundation of the Country—a very frequent phrase with loyalists, and a great deal more interesting than anything that suggests monotheism. But Mr. Asano Wasaburo was prepared to find the Absolute in the revelation which he interpreted:

The material world is but an echo, a reflection, a mirage of the spiritual world. Kunitokotachi-no-Mikoto, though dwelling in so humble an abode as the corporeal frame of the widow Naoko for the purposes of His revelation, is engaged in a mighty task, for in His hand are the destinies of nations, and events in Europe and Asia are subject to His direction. So, terrible as the tragedies of the world may appear, let us never be dismayed, for Omotokyo tells us that the world will be brought at last into the keeping of Amaterasu Omikami, Vicegerent of Amenominakanushi-no-Kami, Lord of All, when Time shall be fulfilled. . . . And may Time be shortened!

It might have been supposed that this effort to glorify Shinto above all other systems would have gratified Japanese vanity, which is insatiable; but when it came to proclaiming Deguchi Nao an Avatar so exalted, faith and propriety showed signs of parting company. Shinto may spread by conquest, as it is doing in this year 1939; foreign diplomats may bow down to its gods, as even the Vatican permits them to do; but even glorification must be according to official prescription. And to identify a peasant woman with the God by Whom the Earth stands for ever,* is to exalt her above

* Vide note by W. G. Aston, on p. 18 of Chamberlain's *Kojiki*. This deity is the first of all mentioned in the *Nihongi*.

POPULAR VARIETIES OF SHINTO

the Sun Goddess and all her progeny and to invite a charge of *lèse-majesté*.

A very popular religion is Konkyoko, which was founded by a saintly farmer, who received his revelation in 1855. It has not been without troubles of its own, but has come through them with no particular scandal or loss. So far as its quality is concerned, there is nothing in it which is opposed to Shinto, and it was registered as Shinto in order to avoid opposition. It uses little of the jargon and none of the names which are the stock-in-trade of the regular Shinto sects; it is ethical without being metaphysical, and, not concerning itself with Olympus, is regarded as monotheistic. Preaching services are its customary religious exercise, and it has well over a million adherents. Though of bucolic origin, it finds its chief popularity among the urban bourgeoisie, to whom perhaps its name, "Gold Lustre Religion," commends it. There is a tendency to add new attributes and to extend its theology—even to the discovery of a "trinitarianism" in its doctrines. Indeed, the newer sects inevitably have a tendency to absorb ideas imported from any quarter.

It has been described elsewhere* how, according to the *Kojiki*, the Korean Earth-god Onamochi agreed with the Sun Goddess to surrender to her descendants his claim to temporal power in Idzumo, on condition that the religious headship of the country should vest in him. Save for the fact that Idzumo still has the largest shrine in Japan, maintained, like that of Ise, by the Government, though not with such care, and save for the persistence of the empty legend that all the gods repair to Idzumo once a year, Yamato could be accused of not having kept faith with Idzumo. Yet, despite this neglect, the Korean god has shown a surprising vitality, and has revived with the revival of Shinto. In

* See page 50.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

1882 Taishakyo (Great Shrine Religion) was legally recognised as a religious sect, and claims nearly three and a half million adherents—twice the number attached to Shinto Honkyoku (or Orthodox Shinto) whose religious centre is the Ise shrine. Then too there is the “mountain sect” Mitakekyo, at whose chief shrine on Mount Ontake is combined the worship of Kunitokotachi, the God by Whom the Earth stands for ever, and Onamochi. As a recognised sect Mitakekyo is exactly the same age as Taishakyo, and claims over two million adherents—these worshippers of Onamochi thus constituting the two most numerous Shinto sects after the very unorthodox Tenrikyo. It is a tremendous climb of some ten thousand feet to the Mitakekyo shrine, so one must presume that a large proportion of the two millions worship from afar. Shinrikyo, with a million and a half, was for a time amalgamated with Mitakekyo, but, finding they had little in common, they separated. Shinrikyo follows chiefly the old and shadowy gods by whom respectively the heavens and the earth stand for ever, and is much concerned with directing other people’s conduct, looking after young men’s societies, ex-prisoners, and others supposed to need counsel, while its religious charter consists of a series of Don’ts that would have gladdened the heart of Moses.

Mitakekyo is a special case among mountain sects. Japan is very mountainous, and it is an act of piety to erect a shrine on top of a mountain and also to visit a shrine thus erected. The innumerable deities who have chiefly a local following are not, of course, of sufficient importance for their devotees to be elevated to the dignity of sects.

The reader need not suppose that the seventeen and a half million adherents of the thirteen recognised sects are to be separated from the rest of the populace in a survey of Japanese religion, any more than one would, in a social survey

POPULAR VARIETIES OF SHINTO

of England, attempt to separate Anglicans, Freemasons, Foresters, Buffaloes, and Sons of the Phoenix. Some Japanese are very good "joiners".

The godlings of wayside shrines are often but one remove from pure animism, which still flourishes in Japan. About 1915, for instance, a cultivator near the city of Okayama was astonished one day to hear a stone speak as he passed it. He did not catch what it said—the marvel was not in the wisdom of its words but in its speaking at all. He told his friends, who came to see this wonderful stone; and as they gazed on it, one noticed that his bellyache was gone, another that his stiff neck was greatly eased, and a third remembered something that he had been trying to think of for days. Evidently it was a stone of virtue: its fame spread: a small shrine was erected to enclose it, and pilgrims came in thousands.

About the same period, at Suma, near Kobe, an equally virtuous snake made its appearance. This merely came out of its hole, and could not be depended upon for even that amount of exhibitionism. Offerings were made, but no shrine was built. But snakes have their place in folklore,* and the Suma Snake had many visitors. In the case both of the speaking stone and of the lucky snake, the cynically-minded took note that there was a convenient tramcar from the city and that the little pilgrimage brought much grist to the tramway company. But that did not abate the popularity of these godlings in the least. In time, of course, they lost their novelty and by now may be completely forgotten.

There is nothing outside the rules of the game in promoting a pilgrimage with a business object in view. There is very

* In a small by-street in Kobe which the writer sometimes used as a short cut on the way to office, somebody erected by the roadside in 1935 a slender post with a Japanese inscription, "The Grave of the White Snake."

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

definitely a business side to pilgrimages, and just as some Western writers have written on the profits of religion, so a Japanese might produce a very entertaining work on "Pilgrims for Profit." A long tram-ride in itself is only a bore, but if it has an objective and a chance of bringing luck, it adds to the interest of life.

It has been related how Buddhism took the Shinto gods under its wing, and often gave them Indian names or found Indian identities for them. But in this Buddhism was doing for Shinto only what Shinto had already done for all sorts of local deities. Anything from a lucky stone upwards would get a name and become a god; and, if it gained repute by some accident, then other shrines would be erected to the same deity—and so some grew: the Sun Goddess, as Mr. Asano has said, has grown until she promises to become the Vicegerent of the Lord of All; while others remain simple wayside reminders that there are more things in heaven and earth than in any rational philosophy.

Among these there are some unresolved confusions, such as the Fox God, associated in some way with the harvest, but much more with demoniac possession. Japanese life is full of superstitions about the power of animals, especially of the fox, famous everywhere for cunning. The fox's identification with the god of food, or of agriculture, is said to have come about through some queer alternative reading of Chinese characters—and that is a great subject in itself. How the fox also came to be identified with the phallus is a much simpler matter, as any Freudian would explain. Whatever the ramifications of the fox superstition—and they are many—we find innumerable shrines dedicated to the fox, and with fox supporters on either side, adorned with large solid tails.

Fox stories are innumerable. Foxes bring wealth, they

POPULAR VARIETIES OF SHINTO

possess people, they make people mad, they take human shape, and they have a repertory of tricks which would keep many poltergeists in business. From time to time the fox gets into the newspapers, generally when some demented old woman is beaten to death; for the fox possession that causes madness can be cured by beating the fox out, but the process is not without its dangers: as we sometimes read when a distinguished surgeon has taken too desperate a chance, "the operation was successful, but the patient succumbed."

Fox superstitions are said to make their first appearance in literature in the *Genji Monogatari*, but this work is a very early one, so there is no telling how much further back their origin lies. They appear also in some of the latest literature, and are certainly as vigorously alive as they have ever been. In Kagawa Toyohiko's famous novel of the slums,* a case of possession much resembling that of a medium at a spiritualistic séance is described. The scene is a meeting of some followers of the Nichiren sect in a small Japanese house:

It was a very tedious service. For ten or twenty minutes they did nothing but repeat *Namu Myoho rengo kyo*, while beating the drum and striking the clappers. Eiichi looked on with patience, however, till at last the noise of the clappers ceased, the drum was silent, and the voice of the worshippers grew lower. Then Ju, with her palms pressed together, lifted up her hands and waved them in the air, while she cried repeatedly, in a low voice, "Namu Arakuma Daimyōjin" (Save us, Arakuma Daimyōjin). All present, with a fearful look in their eyes, fixed their attention on Ju.

Suddenly Ju rose to her feet, all her body quivering.

"I am the fox of the Myōken Shrine at Nosé," she cried. "Ask me what you will. I know everything."

Here we have Shinto, Buddhism, enthusiasm (in its

* *Across the Deathline*, trans. Thomas Satchell, published under the name *Before the Dawn*, by Chatto & Windus.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

original sense) and rural superstition all combined, yet still distinguishable from one another. And Kagawa adds a touch of humour by making the medium and her husband members of a Christian church! Nichiren deliberately adopted the fox superstition, because its wide spread made his converts feel at home, and it was very congruent with the noisy fanaticism which he cultivated as the distinguishing mark of his sect.

Badgers, weasels, cats and other animals, according to still living superstitions, all have magical powers. Some anthropologists connect these animal potencies with phallic worship, though the connection does not appear to be a necessary one. There is, quite apart from them, much phallic worship in Japan, the great temple at Ikoma, near Nara, being a famous centre. Europeans visiting Japan soon after the country was open to foreign intercourse frequently saw popular processions in which the phallic emblems were carried, with much ribald jesting; but in those days there was a great desire to act according to foreign standards in public places, and accordingly shrines were constructed in which the emblems could hide their form while still exercising their potency.

The most recent of the Neo-Shinto sects is Hito-no-Michi (the Way of Man), a name contrasting with Kami-no-Michi, which is the Japanese way of reading Shinto, the Way of the Gods. Motoori, it may be remarked, would have been distressed at the idea of his being known to history as the promoter of the Shinto Revival, for to call the Way of the Gods by a Chinese name was very much against his principles. Hito-no-Michi had a large number of branches and held very noisy services far into the night. Man, according to these zealots, went shouting very patriotically on his Way. But in 1937 trouble arose. The sect was suspected of heterodoxy

and of political intentions. The usual course was taken: the chief priests were accused of the wholesale debauching of young girls, and there were extensive prosecutions. The Press was well supplied with charges against the accused, and as the publication of such charges leads to prosecutions neither for libel nor for contempt of court, all the publicity desired was secured, and, after a brief investigation, the sect was proscribed. There was no protest, and perhaps the adherents were satisfied that they had been deceived by evil men. Where a loud boast of patriotism is sufficient foundation on which to erect a swollen reputation, evil men have every incentive to pose as prophets and patriots.

Debauchery under a religious mask can be found in almost any country; and though the publication of the charge is no reason for believing in its truth, there are some bad cases. The affair of the God of Onden, about 1930, was a beastly business, in which the Japanese newspapers revelled;* and those whose task it is to extirpate heresy make the most of such charges when they are true, for they are a godsend in that they increase the credibility of accusations that are false.

These Neo-Shinto sects and other religious manifestations are symptomatic of a real spiritual conflict. Tribal instinct shrinks from monotheism, but now that Japan has become a great World Power, she has to change her manner of thinking and to reach out to some belief worthy of citizens of the world. To any Japanese of comprehensive mind the universalisation of his tribal beliefs is almost impossible, since they are so trivial and absurd; so the Japanese with a modern education has to keep his mind in separate compartments: with one part of it he tries to be a devout worshipper of the Emperor, because he is brought up in the assumption that

* So did the late Taig O'Conroy, in *Menace of Japan*. London: Hurst & Blackett, Ltd.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

only thus can Japan remain a first-class nation; with the other part he may be a modern man, shut off, it is true, from some branches of thought and study, but otherwise not excluded from intellectual satisfactions so long as the whole mind is not permitted to function at once. A sense of the absurdity of the primitive Japanese cosmology restrains intellectuals from deliberate attempts to universalise the national faith, so most of the Neo-Shinto sects are the outcome of an attempt to find a spiritual manna in the barren waste of Shinto.

Where moral teachings have been imported into Shinto, Basil Hall Chamberlain saw a borrowing from the Chinese, and where there is a hint of sublime conceptions Kato Genchi admits at least the possibility of a Chinese origin. Anesaki Masaharu, on the other hand, is more inclined to see Christian elements in Neo-Shinto teachings. The ideas are not irreconcilable, as Anesaki's opinion was expressed twenty-five years after Chamberlain's, and referred particularly to movements which had developed since Chamberlain's time. All these scholars, like Dr. Nitobe, the learned Japanese Quaker, agree that there was little worth calling a religion at all in early Shinto, if we require of religion that it include spiritual and moral ideas.

CHAPTER VIII

ORTHODOXY AND AUTHORITY



THOUGH for the sake of enforcing national unity Shinto had been put on a new basis and the divinity of the Imperial Family invested with a grandeur which made it ridiculous, the Japanese were for a long time uneasily conscious that they were outside Christendom and were in a sense looked down upon. This somewhat irked the new national pride which, formerly regarding the unknown world as barbarous, was now anxious that Japan should not be regarded as barbarous by a world which had become known and which was more surprising than had been expected. As recently as the early years of the present century, therefore, statesmen seriously considered the advisability of making Japan a Christian country. Christian exclusiveness was a difficulty that stood in the way: it was obviously impracticable to throw over Shinto, on which the whole polity was founded, or Buddhism, which had a strong hold over the sentiments of the people; and there was an almost pathetic failure to understand why an official amalgam of the three faiths should not be regarded as completely satisfactory, and as making the best of both Christian and pagan worlds.

The Great War swept away the idea that Christianity conferred such prestige on its adherents that it was a political necessity for a first-class nation. It was still more gratifying

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

to the patriotic to observe that not only could national prestige be attained without Christianity but that political success conferred prestige on whatever religion a successful people professed. This fact was not left to Japanese research to discover: it was brought to their door. So long as the political inferiority of the people to whom they preached was assured, Christian missionaries were neither troubled by doubt nor deterred by delicacy in saying plainly that the gods of the heathen were false gods, and their creeds deceit and imposture. But when it became politically inconvenient to take this line, and when moreover religion itself was being vigorously criticised in Christendom, it became fashionable to find virtue in faith, no matter what that faith was,* and to discover in particular that nearly everything that was good existed already in Japanese religion, and even that by accepting Christianity Japanese might become all the more loyal to their Incarnate God. On this last proposition the heathen formed their own opinion, and, though politeness bade them acquiesce, they were all the more insistent on the outward manifestation of loyalty on the part of native Christians—and even of foreign Christians.

A group of representatives of American missionary societies made an Asiatic tour about 1933, and published a report on what they were pleased to call the “re-thinking of missions,” in which they laid it down that it was the duty of missionaries to find as much good as possible in the beliefs which they desired to supplant—or perhaps only to supplement. Tokyo had already sent an envoy to the Vicegerent of Christ, and the Vatican sent one to the Descendant of the Sun Goddess. Some of the missionaries, contemplating these developments, felt that their foes were those of their own

* “Even if the object of faith were only a fish’s head,” as Motoori said (see p. 140). That earnest zealot anticipated them, but in a different spirit.

ORTHODOXY AND AUTHORITY

house; others hurried to seek the goodwill of Baal, and would write books in which they discovered "religious values" worth preserving in the most puerile and degrading superstitions.*

There is no little resemblance between the obligation to acknowledge the divinity of the Emperor of Japan to-day and that of acknowledging the divinity of the Emperor of Rome nineteen hundred years ago. Rome was the most religious of cities, and the most liberal, and its inhabitants were free to profess any faith they liked so long as they burnt incense to Cæsar. So to-day in Japan one has only to bow at the official shrine, and thereafter one may say, "La Illa il' Allaho," or "I believe in One God, the Father Almighty," or may attend a Voodoo meeting for anything Japanese officialdom cares. On the subject of the obligatory participation in Shinto services, it is not uncommon for the argument to be used that, as the shrine is but wood and the prayers uttered before it are meaningless, participation means nothing, for a Christian cannot worship that which does not exist; so, if it pleases the Japanese and makes the task of proselytisation easier, there is no objection to conforming; and some of the missionaries go so far as to act on this reasoning. Such are the remarkable effects attained by the political rehabilitation of paganism. The early Christians took a different view, but times change.

Missionaries who ventured to denounce the monstrous lie of the God-Emperor would be made excessively uncomfortable for a time and would then be deported. Indeed, they do not have to go to such lengths as that to learn that their presence cannot be tolerated. In 1937 the Rev. Spencer Kennard, returning from a visit to America, was refused

* e.g. *Religious Values in Japanese Culture*, by the Rev. T. T. Brumbaugh. Tokyo, 1934.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

permission to land, his offence being that he was a pacifist. But the treatment which a foreign missionary receives on account of any recalcitrancy regarding the divinity of the Emperor is a very mild matter compared with that meted out to a Japanese who is even suspected of unorthodoxy, and missionaries therefore feel unable to recommend Japanese Christians to offer themselves for a martyrdom in which their foreign advisers would not participate.

In Japanese Christian circles there may be observed from time to time the same irritation against the idea of foreignness as could be seen as far back as the eighth century, and which, with Motoori, was raised to such a pitch as to become a burning inspiration. Undoubtedly there was something foreign about Christianity, and there was a desire, where it had been accepted and self-respect would have suffered in dropping it, to give it a Japanese character. In 1938 it was announced that the Salvation Army's young officers were determined to propagate Christianity in a form suited to the conditions of the country, and doing away with the imitation of European or American methods.*

There is little inclination among Japanese Christians to come into collision with Shinto orthodoxy, but there is a considerable inclination to "improve" Christianity, just as Japanese Buddhists, according to their own claims, have improved Buddhism. There is much force in the argument that Western Protestantism has a history so different from that of Japan that as a cultural complex it is hardly suitable for transplantation to so alien a soil; but when all adjustments suited to time and place are made, a Christianity which can find itself compatible with the requirements of Japanese

* Strangely enough, the Salvation Army, though not a particularly numerous body, enjoys a peculiar prestige owing to its patronage by the Empress-Dowager.

ORTHODOXY AND AUTHORITY

patriotism is one that would not require even two mules' burdens of earth as a makebelieve for the Promised Land. The classic pronouncement on this subject was made in the early years of the twentieth century by Dr. Ebina, a leading Japanese Christian of that time, who protested that the Imperial Mythology gave him no difficulty whatever:

Though the encouragement of ancestor-worship cannot be regarded as part of the essential teaching of Christianity, it [i.e. Christianity] is not opposed to the notion that, when the Japanese Empire was founded, its early rulers were in communication with the Great Spirit that rules the universe. Christians, according to this theory, without doing violence to their creed, may acknowledge that the Japanese nation has a divine origin. It is only when we realise that the Imperial Ancestors were in close communion with God (or the Gods) that we understand how sacred is the country in which we live.

The Japanese conception of truth differs profoundly from the Western. Since Dr. Ebina wrote this, the exigencies of Japanese Imperialism have greatly increased, but it will be observed that even thirty years ago the distinguished Japanese theologian skilfully evaded the real issues. Since then we have gone further, but not always with acceptance. Late in 1937 there was a Japanese Congregational minister who, well launched on the favourite topic of Japan's duty to improve Christianity, said that the doctrine of the Trinity was not suitable for Japan, though it might do for the Occident. It was necessary in Japan, he said, to recognise Four Persons of the Godhead, of whom the Emperor should be honoured first. But alas! this valiant effort to be all the better patriot for being a Christian failed badly. The patriotic societies were extremely angry with the pastor for insulting the Emperor.

But the more powerful the Japanese orthodoxy becomes,

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

the more nervous is it of even the most abjectly accommodating Christianity. If Christians neglect attendance at the Shrine gatherings, orthodoxy sees therein an alarming sign of dangerous thought and of a disloyalty inspired by foreign malevolence. Soon after the annexation of Korea, there was something approaching an open breach. Korea had been excessively backward, but had lately welcomed the missionaries, who brought education as well as religion, and the English literature of liberty as well as the Hebrew aspiration towards God. In the resulting intellectual renaissance, Japanese officialdom saw a great danger, which it checked by punishment of mare's-nest conspiracies and later by the bloody suppression of an imaginary rebellion. Missionaries were implicated in the conspiracies, but though they demanded to be put on trial, the Japanese refused to prosecute them. As time passed, the officials grew both bolder and more fearful. Shrines had been erected, at which the Koreans had to assemble on the appropriate days, and the missionaries had to accompany their pupils there, or retire from the field. In Formosa, still more drastic action was taken. There the missionaries were not only required to visit the Shinto shrines, but were forbidden to communicate with their flocks except in the Japanese language; and it was ordained that every Christian church must install within the building, and "in the most honourable place," a Shinto shrine. In Japan itself it was expedient to go more slowly, but, as mentioned elsewhere,* even Rome was brought to heel in the matter of shrine-visiting, and in the Japanese equivalent of the Anglican Church, a prayer for the Emperor which had been in use for forty years was prohibited, because it was "disrespectful" to pray for the Emperor to any god but his own ancestors. Japanese Christians were generally anxious

* See page 149.

not to offend, for the charge of being disloyal is one which, however false, no Japanese dare face. But the slightest departure from the common rut was liable to bring trouble. In one case a Japanese Christian minister was sent to prison and his flock dispersed, their offence being that they lived communistically in a village of their own. That was before the Russian revolution, but Communism was already dreaded.

It has already been explained how, when the Constitution was granted in 1889, guaranteeing the freedom of religion, a decree that the compulsory ceremonies at the shrines were not religious followed. The professors of Christianity have been too discreet to stand up against this transparent violation of the constitutional guarantee.

Not from this direction was any effective attack on the evil of Japanese Imperialism to be looked for. That must come from within. There is one creed at least—that of Kark Marx—which makes no compromises with Emperors, still less with Gods. Early in the century one Kotoku and eleven others, including a woman, were tried *in camera* and executed, the whole procedure being conducted with a secrecy and dispatch which suggested some serious conspiracy. It was given out that the people executed had made a plot to assassinate the Emperor Meiji, but no details were ever vouchsafed, and the belief commonly obtains that they were not conspirators but simply Communists, whose doctrines, it is true, if they became prevalent, would overthrow the whole polity. For some years after the Kotoku affair nothing was heard of Communism, but when the revolution in Russia alarmed the Japanese authorities, the most rigid steps were taken to keep the subversive doctrine out of Japan.

So it was left to the atheistic Marxists to emulate the early

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Christians. Like them, they suffered, and suffer to-day, untold tribulations for their faith. Not a few have died in the hands of the police. Many more have been cast into prison for terms long enough to break down the strongest mind;* and still more numerous are those who have, after long torture, been liberated far gone in tuberculosis. But more follow them and will continue to do so. When not personally affected, we are apt to dismiss the matter with an easy, "Truth is mighty and will prevail." But will truth prevail? Carlyle says, "The first of all gospels is this, that a lie cannot endure for ever." Can we be sure of this, except in the sense that nothing human endures for ever? The Japanese believe that falsehood is more enduring than truth, and on February 11, 1940, they will be celebrating the 2,600th anniversary of the Oldest Lie in the World. That is why they wanted the Olympic Games in that year, and abandoned them with reluctance when it became apparent that they could neither be sure of reducing China to subjection by that date nor of being in fit condition themselves to hold the great athletic festival, besides which there was the certainty that a number of important countries would excuse themselves from participating. The Japanese attach an extraordinary value to inducing foreigners to conform with their fable of the divinity of the Emperor. They have succeeded in getting the whole diplomatic corps to bow down to the Household Shrine containing the spurious Sacred Treasures. But that was within the comparative privacy of the Palace: they wanted more: they wanted the world's athletes from all countries to acknowledge, "in the sight of the heathen," by their salutations before the Meiji

* One of Kotoku's associates escaped the rope, and survived in prison till 1937, when he was liberated. Apparently his mind was quite gone, as the newspaper interviewers could make nothing of him.

ORTHODOXY AND AUTHORITY

Shrine, the Godhead of the Emperor of Japan. Thanks to the staunchness of the Chinese, Christendom has been spared this humiliation for a season.

Though Japanese patriotically declare on every occasion that their own polity is unique and that foreign countries offer no points of comparison, they viewed with some misgiving the overthrow of the Imperial House of China; but the inferiority of the Chinese had been a patriotic theme with them for generations, and if the revolution brought about ruin in China, there would be pickings for Japan. Much more alarm was felt when the Bolshevik revolution swept away the Romanoffs, for the Tsars had been both sacred and powerful. Throughout the long "intervention" in Siberia, from 1918 till 1922, there were constant alarms about Japanese soldiers, sometimes officers and sometimes men of the ranks, being "reddened", and though patriotism was often stimulated by the pleasant exercise of massacring a village supposed to be Bolshevik, the fear was not lessened.

Though even soldiers sometimes exhibited these alarming symptoms of mental activity, it was rather in scholastic circles that the dangerous effects of political thinking became manifest. "Dangerous thought" was the subject of many official pronouncements and the excuse for many judicial prosecutions. Emphasis was laid on the impropriety of students below the university level so much as knowing anything about politics save the apocryphal puerilities of their school books; but it was announced that thought in universities was free. Freedom soon proved to have very narrow bounds. There was a young professor who made a special study of the works of Prince Kropotkin, and ventured to compare him with Nichiren—which was grossly flattering to Nichiren. He lost his post and suffered a good deal of persecution. The guarantee of freedom of thought in the

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

universities was merely a prelude to the industrious weeding out of all "thinking" professors, and even those who were merely liberal and believed in a moderate amount of freedom of speech were not spared. In April 1928 came the first of many large-scale raids on supposed Communists, over a thousand being arrested in one night and the fact of any and all arrests being kept an official secret; by July of the same year there was not a liberal professor left in any university.* Both in universities and in the colleges below university rank, elaborate systems of espionage were installed, with spying teachers and spying pupils; students were arrested in considerable numbers and kept *incommunicado* for months at a time, their families only knowing that they had disappeared, and fearing the worst. Espionage was even extended to Japanese abroad.

It might be thought only natural that a Government so corrupt and reactionary as that of General Baron Tanaka should do these things. The same Government tightened up the Peace Preservation Law so as to make the dissemination of Socialist doctrines a capital offence. But when, under the Hamaguchi Government which followed, Japan's foreign policy was enlightened for a brief period with the last spark of liberalism, there was no relaxation in the heresy hunt. The sinister Adachi, the Home Minister, whose political reputation was built on his one achievement, the murder of the Queen of Korea, saw to that, and the liberals seemed to be as much afraid of the Communists as were the reactionaries. After each mass arrest it was announced that the evil was extirpated at last; but it always cropped up again.

The treatment of suspects was extremely brutal. Some Press photographs of groups of these young men, taken when,

* At the beginning of 1939 a weeding out of liberal professors was announced. There is always a lower depth.

ORTHODOXY AND AUTHORITY

after examination, they were being transferred to prison to await trial, were so shocking that the police prohibited the publication of such pictures—not the treatment that produced such effects. That the dull, brutal and hardly human expressions of the prisoners were not their natural appearance was indicated when one of the more enlightened judges, on sentencing a batch of prisoners to long terms of penal servitude, expressed his sense of the painfulness of this duty, seeing that the convicts were all a very high type of young man.

Whatever change of Government there might be, the persecution of Communism went on relentlessly. The more monstrous grew the claims of Emperor-worship as the one thing upon which national prosperity depended, the more ferocious were the measures taken against those who, like the Christians in ancient Rome, would have none of it: and there were those who endured to the end, suffering all things for their belief, without even the hope of a personal reward when life forsook their tortured bodies. Japanese romance has accounts of steadfastness as great; but this devotion to an idea is remarkable among a people habituated to the assumption that truth is relative and that belief may be held in as many things as are expedient, contradictory though they may be.

While the heresy hunt increased in intensity, there was an accompanying severity in the censorship, and the number of things of which mention was forbidden multiplied. The *index librorum prohibitorum* increased in length, and presently all travellers had to submit a list of the books they carried, and all books and magazines coming in by post were examined and no small number destroyed.

There is a numerous class in every country which is very conscious that in any rearrangement of society, especially in one the object of which is to award to each his deserts,

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

their position would be in jeopardy. As this class in Japan, despite its professions of fanatical faith, knows that its security is founded upon a myth, any idea of change perturbs it immensely; and of this class the army is the section with most solidarity, and it therefore constitutes itself the exemplar and judge of loyalty. The more passionate the asseverations of loyalty become, the less do the loyalists really believe that the country is loyal, perhaps because of the ridiculousness of their own protestations. The late Count Goto, who led the way to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia, declared that it was absurd to prate continually about the unique loyalty of Japan and at the same time to exhibit an almost insane fear of the effect of the least unpatriotic utterance. But Goto belonged to a generation to which increasing prosperity seemed almost like a law of nature, and his faith in its continuance in his own country was so robust that he was unable to share the dread of change that had come over many of his contemporaries, old and young.

In a world where applied science and abundant production have created more economic difficulties than they have solved, there is a very widespread fear of economic readjustments which may have adverse consequences. Surveying the world from China to Peru, the Japanese have observed that the greatest and wealthiest countries cannot provide employment for their people; they see increasing difficulties ahead for their own country; they dread the emergence of a militant proletariat, and they cannot see any means of keeping it reconciled to its lot except by propaganda and repression. The common man must be made to understand not only the duty of utter devotion to the Emperor, but the inclusion in this, as an essential part of the devotion, of obedience to all who serve the Emperor, and abstention from all presump-

tuous attempts to question or alter the laws laid down for their guidance.

For the army the disappointing economic developments have created special difficulties. Some European revolutionaries have discovered that a single revolution is not all that is necessary, but that as soon as one revolution is accomplished, it is time to prepare for the next. A somewhat similar necessity finds Japan aghast but still resolute. The reforms of 1868 were not the accomplishment of a task but only its beginning. The world to which Japan tried to conform was itself rapidly changing, and Japan finds continual changes necessary, even while she cries out for Imperial Commissions to decide on the Perfect Policy and Imperial sanction for its pursuit for evermore. As economic perplexities increase, it becomes more difficult to get sufficient money to maintain the army, and the army, owing to the wealth of new inventions, becomes more expensive every year. Moreover, the prestige of the army declines in times of peace, and the taxpayers might soon refuse to pay for it to swagger in expensive uselessness, as it did throughout the Tokugawa period, when it stuck to its armour and its arrows while the rest of the world had breech-loaders and mitrailleuses.

A divine Emperor can only maintain his godhead if he has conquering legions. It was maintained through centuries of neglect and even poverty, but there was no national army then, nor was Japan caught up in the economic tangle through which all the world is trying to hack a way, by New Deals and Doles, by Communism, by Fascism, by Nazi-ism, and in Japan by Cæsarism. Interdependence becomes a bugbear when imports continually drain away gold, and the standard of living seems to depend upon the work of helot races, or classes, either at home or abroad. War has enriched Japan,

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

and to war the army looks for the solution of economic problems, for the justification of its own existence, and for the means to provide for its own sustenance and maintain its prestige. It looks back longingly to the Tokugawa days when Japan was an economic unit, and it looks forward to a time when, by expansion, it shall become an economic unit again. The first addition was encouraging, for Formosa has paid almost from the outset. Korea proved to be a liability, and in spite of increase both in population and crops, it always required some of Japan's money to make its accounts balance. South Manchuria showed better results, and it seemed to the Japanese that its prosperity was due to their strong arm rather than to Chinese industry; and what they held directly was but the small Liaotung Peninsula and the South Manchuria Railway.

Then, disastrously as it seemed to the army, a Government came into power in 1929 whose leaders were determined to follow a pacific ideal. There was something Gladstonian about Premier Hamaguchi: he believed in a fair deal, even towards China, in economy as a means of making financial ends meet, in treaties that would facilitate disarmament, in reducing the national debt and maintaining a sound currency. It was a fine programme, but the times were not propitious. England had already drifted far from free trade, the great American slump came as soon as Hamaguchi had taken the helm, "economic nationalism" disguised a general preparation for war and put a blight on world trade, and England went off gold. Hamaguchi fought on, till he was murdered, and succeeded in reducing both army and navy; but on September 18, 1931, the army struck, and seized Manchuria.

Military economists were positively lyrical about this performance. Their favourite name for the new region was "The Happy Valley," and they described how the Japanese

lion would lie down there with the Chinese and Korean lambs. It soon appeared, however, that Japan and Manchukuo together did not form an economic unit. Indeed, Manchuria could supply very few of the commodities the import of which from foreign countries was so irksome. Life would, of course, have been possible in isolation; but China showed signs of reawakening in strength, and that could never be tolerated. North China could supply some of the deficiencies of Manchuria; but even the addition of North China would hardly make an economic unit of which the Japanese fraction could be assured of the means wherewith to keep in the forefront of the nations and defy all possible enemies; and unless it did this, safety was never quite assured. It was easiest, after all, to carry on with what many soldiers regarded as Japan's historic destiny—the conquest of China.

Another reason for seeking adventure was that the army had its internal quarrels, and the more complete was its supremacy in the councils of the Empire, the more serious those quarrels became. There were rumours of a section of the army reverting to the well-tried custom of forcing an abdication. The Emperor's closest advisers would have nothing to do with the extremer elements in the army, and, as a consequence, a number of bungled plots culminated in the bungled murders of the morning of February 26, 1936. Of the murders, however, several were successful; the senior officers concerned left the juniors to pay the penalty and assumed the right to choose the Cabinet Ministers, so the murders paved the way for the attempt begun, a little more than a year later, to conquer China.

In the world of to-day it is impossible to remain stationary: growth is regarded as necessary for survival. In business the turnover must grow; populations, budgets and armaments all have to show an increase; and in Japan the prestige of the

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

army and the divinity of the Emperor must continually rise to a higher pitch. The military men, indeed, live in a continual panic lest lack of sufficient increase in Emperor-worship, in territory, and in armaments should presage decadence. The frog in the fable went off in a loud explosion without much harm being done; but the amount of harm that can be done by a Power with the ambitions of Japan, and these ambitions bound up with a fanatical belief in a God-Emperor and the divine right of the army to speak and act for him, is incalculable. The synthetic nature of the fanaticism does not make it any the less dangerous a drug with which to madden the national mind.

CHAPTER IX

THE MAKING OF A BOOK



TO the Japanese mind it is probable that the necessity of Emperor-worship having a canon of its own has seldom occurred. Some patriots have found it convenient to declare that their patriotism is ineffable, and consequently superior to that of any who try to put their sentiments into words. Nevertheless, there is an undoubted desire as time goes on to elevate Emperor-worship to the dignity of a national religion, and an uneasy feeling exists among some of the most patriotic that it lacks substance. They can shut their eyes to the fact that it is ridiculous, but it is not so easy to put aside the feeling that it is lacking in content. If ever we are to have a collection of Shinto sacred literature, it will probably be very oddly assorted. The *Kojiki* by itself is altogether too absurd to serve as a Shinto canon, though criticism of it is liable to involve the critic in a charge of disrespect to the Imperial House. The *Nihongi* being in Chinese, and hopelessly at variance with the *Kojiki*, may be ruled out, though for scholars it has its own value as a sort of Apocrypha. After all, the *Kojiki* is the foundation of the whole superstructure of the State, and may well remain so. Like the foundations of a building, it is best left concealed, and its authority is guaranteed by the fact that few indeed are able to read it, and fewer still inclined to do so.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Where there is to be devotion, some sacred book embodying its principles is advisable. Professor Basil Hall Chamberlain suggested that the Rescript on Education* and some of the Emperor Meiji's poems might form such a book. When Chamberlain wrote this the Emperor Meiji was still living, but the suggestion has lost none of its force, for since his death there has been a very definite deification of Meiji. They are all gods, but one god differs from another in glory and Meiji has become the greatest since Jimmu Tenno. Nevertheless, no definite book has yet been promulgated. Of the spirit at work, however, one may judge by the case of a patriotic old gentleman who, in the House of Peers in 1935, held forth very fervently on the subject of the importance of religion, meaning thereby Shinto. He declared that it would be better for the Education Department to devote itself wholeheartedly to the inculcation of correct religious ideas in the schools—that all other education was unimportant by comparison, and might be dropped without much loss. And you cannot educate without text-books.

It is not at all improbable that a large number of loyalists would echo the adepts of Zen, who insist on the ineffability of their doctrine: there are certainly some to-day who are very hard to satisfy, and who, when finding fault with scholars who try to express their thoughts, declare that *Kokutai*, and the subject's devotion to the Emperor, are not to be expressed in words but can only be felt, and only imparted, by loyal subjects. It is to be suspected, however, that most of these are anxious to be taken at their own valuation and are uneasily conscious of their own defects of expression, which they are not willing to expose to the shafts of criticism.

However, there are few who can resist the temptation to

* For the text of the Rescript see page 137.

impose authority on others, and the emergence of a canon is by no means unlikely. Should this happen, we may expect to see included therein the Rescript to the Army and Navy, issued eight years earlier than the Rescript on Education. It is really of equally wide application, for the whole manhood of the nation is theoretically liable to serve. The Rescript reads:

Our country's troops have been led by the Emperors throughout all ages. The Emperor Jimmu, the founder of the Imperial dynasty, in person commanded the national forces and subdued the natives and rebels of the Central Provinces. Since he ascended the throne more than 2,500 years have elapsed, and during that interval, parallel with other changes, our military organisation has been frequently altered. In old times the Emperors themselves led their troops; and although Empresses and Heirs Apparent sometimes acted in their place, yet there was no instance of the supreme military authority being entrusted to subjects. In the Middle Ages, both civil and military organisations were modelled on those of China at that period. Six Military Stations, and left and right Cavalry Bureaux were instituted, and a defensive army was established, and thus the military organisation was perfected. But the tranquillity which so long prevailed rendered the Government effeminate, and the military class spontaneously separated from the peasantry. The old system of universal conscription then naturally merged into one of volunteers, and these volunteers in the progress of time formed the Bu-shi (or samurai class). Thence onwards all warlike functions devolved solely upon the Bu-shi, into whose hands the great administrative powers also fell in consequence of the anarchy that prevailed throughout the Empire. The Government of military men that resulted continued in power for as long as some seven hundred years. Although such a state of things was independent of human power, being produced in consequence of the changes of the times, yet it was none the less grievous, as it was not in accord with our national constitution, and it moreover infringed the organisation established by our progenitors. Still later, in the eras of Kokwa and Kayei

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

(1844-51), the military Government of the Tokugawa decayed; foreign difficulties supervened, and things came to such a pass that it was not altogether unlikely that We should suffer from the disdain of foreign nations. Our Grandfather, the Emperor Ninko, and Our Father, the Emperor Komei, were, therefore, seriously troubled on the subject. To them we feel thankful and deferential. In the early days of Our Own succession, We being very young, the Shogun relinquished to Us his political power, and the Daimio and Shomio handed to us their fiefs; and, when all parts of the Empire were consolidated, a few years afterwards, We restored the ancient organisation of Government. This is partly, of course, due to the meritorious deeds of those loyal and virtuous civil and military servants who assisted us, and to the grace of Our forefathers who had generously favoured their subjects, yet it is also in part ascribable to the fact that Our subjects, being well acquainted with the principles of right, hold royalty in high esteem. Now, desiring to reform Our martial institutions, and to brighten the effulgence of Our country's glory, We have established Our military and naval organisations as they stand now, in this fifteenth year of Our reign (1882).

WE WIELD THE CHIEF MILITARY POWER; and, although the management of its details is entrusted to Our servants, yet its principal effect is possessed by Us and shall never be vested in Our lieutenants. This principle must always be recognised, and will be bequeathed to Our descendants. The tenet that the Emperor holds the whole civil and military power being established, such an error as that which originated in the times after the Middle Ages can, We trust, never occur again. We are the Commander-in-Chief of all of you, military and naval men. And hence, while We esteem you as Our members, you must regard Us as your head; and thus our relations will always be closely intimate. It depends upon your faithful discharge of your duties that We, protecting the country, can be able to render account to the grace of Heaven and the favour of Our ancestors. You ought to be as concerned as We are for the extension of Our national prestige. If Our military organisation be perfected and its honour assured you will participate with Us in the fame acquired. Should you, carefully attending to your duties,

THE MAKING OF A BOOK

conform to Our desire, and do your best for the protection of the country, the people will enjoy happiness and tranquillity for ever, and Our national influence will be brilliant. We have good hopes of you, military and naval men; and have some matters about which We wish to give you further instructions.

First, those serving in either branch must consider loyalty their principal duty. Of all those born in the Empire, are there any who would not do their best for its welfare? But naval and military men should specially take this to heart, as otherwise they will be wholly useless. Without patriotism they are no better than puppets. They must also be familiar with the arts and well versed in science. However well drilled and systematically organised, troops destitute of loyalty must resemble mere disorderly mobs in the time of active operations. The safeguard of the country and the maintenance of the national prestige are entrusted to the soldiery—and, therefore, you must remember that the development or decadence of your organisation is synonymous with the rise or fall of your country's fortune. Unattracted by the opinions expressed by the public, and regardless of politics, you should devote yourselves to your allegiance as your principal duty, esteeming fidelity weightier than mountains, and death lighter than a feather. Maintain your integrity; suffer calmly unexpected misfortunes; and thus preserve your fame unblemished.

Secondly, both land and sea forces must observe the etiquette of discipline. The Commander-in-Chief and the lowest soldier have their functions one towards the other. And all the military relations are not simply those of command on the one hand and obedience on the other; but among men of the same grade there are distinctions of age and youth, long service and new. Recruits should respect the older soldiers, and all inferiors should obey their superiors as they would Ourselves. And this respect should be extended to officers and men of older service, even though belonging to another corps. For their part, superiors should not be haughty and overbearing. Except when the strict exercise of authority is necessary in the discharge of duty, the higher in position should be kind and courteous to those below him; and thus those of all ranks will work together

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

for the Imperial cause. Anyone bearing arms who is regardless of this rule, rude to his betters or arrogant to his subordinates, must be deemed a poison to his service and an offender against his country.

Thirdly, military men should hold valour in the highest esteem. From remote ages heroism has been adored in Our domains; and, therefore, every subject in Our nation should be staunch. Still more should those whose duty it is to be always ready for battle constantly remember that they should be valiant. But of valour there are two degrees. Aggressive and boisterous behaviour is not courage. Hence those who serve should keep guard over their temper, and always act with due reflection. They should invariably do their duty with precision, neither despising a weak not dreading a mighty foe. This is to be really intrepid. Hence those who have gallantry in true reverence will cultivate suavity in their intercourse with others, and endeavour to secure for themselves affection and respect. Should they be rough and violent on trifling provocation, people will come to dislike them and regard them as wolves. Attention must be paid to this matter.

Fourthly, military men should be inspired by mutual integrity and fidelity. This principle is applicable to the whole community, but more stringently to soldiers, who are impotent among their fellows without it. We may explain "integrity" as the performance of one's word, and "fidelity" as assiduity in the discharge of one's duty. To be thus just and faithful, one must consider, from the very commencement, all one's actions and one's ability to do what one has promised. If one thoughtlessly pledges his word to anything which he is not certain he can perform with integrity and fidelity, he is liable to expose himself to great trouble. Subsequent repentance will be of no avail. Therefore it is well to deliberate beforehand; and, if one finds success unattainable, to relinquish the project soon. From ages past there have been many men—brave and great—who have left their names sullied to posterity because they have pursued trifles and private aims, in defiance of great and public principles. Profound respect must be paid to this subject.

Fifthly, soldiers should be frugal. Otherwise they are liable to become effeminate, selfish, luxurious, and lastly, greedy and mean-

THE MAKING OF A BOOK

mind. Virtue and valour must then fade, and come to be despised, which would be a great calamity. Should such an abuse once obtain, it will spread like a canker, corrupt even the chivalrous. Dreading such a result, We, some time ago, framed the "Regulations for dismissal"; and being still anxious We address you a caution which We warn you not heedlessly to disregard.

All persons bearing arms are ordered not to neglect the observance of these five rules for one moment; and to their effectual discharge a true heart is necessary. These five articles should express the spirit of the soldiery, and "true-heartedness" is the spirit of the articles. So long as the heart is not true, good speech and good conduct are mere outward show and valueless. On the other hand, anything can be achieved by a true heart. The above five articles expressing, as they do, tenets of universal application should be easy of observance.

This mélange of bogus history and good advice was read to a new year full dress parade of army and navy on January 4, 1882, and on every Sunday morning for many years after. Every soldier has a copy, which he is exhorted to study diligently. The late Professor Longford said, "It is the Holy Bible of both officers and men, to be most reverently cherished and most loyally obeyed so long as life lasts, and it is cherished and obeyed with an amount of reverence and loyalty far exceeding that given to their Bible in their daily lives or thoughts by our own soldiers or by our own citizens."

It is characteristic that the claims upon which the demand for integrity and fidelity are based are palpably false; but it is curious that whereas in the eighth century a general illiteracy permitted a wide freedom in the falsification of history, the great mass of testimony existing as to the facts of later times compels this new imperial interpretation to seek refuge in a brief and vague obscurity. Nor is this the only handicap that we suffer to-day. In the time of the *Kojiki* if tradition

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

said that an Emperor was bad, the scribe set him down as bad, undeterred by any absurd idea that divinity must be good—which, after all, is Hebraic theology, or perhaps purely metaphysical. But now, so is the Japanese mind corrupted by Western thought, God-Emperors were necessarily good, and history has to be bowdlerised accordingly. So far, however, nobody has taken in hand the task of writing Japanese history in a manner that would flatter the modern exigences of loyalty. That would be a task so gigantic and the effort so obviously vain that history is better left among the ineffables. Unless faith is equal to the requirement that all Emperors were Gods, then to seek for proof would be absurd. But if we want an authoritative canon of Shinto, this Rescript to the Army and Navy would form a valuable contribution.

It is possible that a few other rescripts might be found worthy of ranking with these two specially famous ones; but the selection would have to be carefully made, for there are rescripts and rescripts. Mr. Ozaki Yukio, once turning in wrath against the men who, pretending to be patriots, used a constitutional monarch for unconstitutional purposes, said, "The Throne is their rampart; Rescripts are their missiles." It is only one here and there of these divine utterances that offers permanent enlightenment.

Though Meiji is now near to being chief among the Gods, it is probable that his poems are read less often than they were thirty years ago, when Chamberlain suggested the inclusion of some of them in the Shinto canon. The Emperor Meiji was a very prolific producer of the *tanka*, the thirty-one syllable poem which is the standard verse of Japan, and there are some thirty thousand of his compositions extant. Connoisseurs find them of high quality; and as Japanese verse has neither rhyme nor accent, and can be

THE MAKING OF A BOOK

improvised by a child, we must rely on their judgment regarding its merit. In translation it is never impressive, but that is too harsh a test for any verse. The Emperor probably had far more to do with the composition of his verses than with that of his rescripts, to which he merely assented, but we cannot be too sure, for it is a very common thing in Japan for literary works to be fathered by men much more eminent than their actual writers; and some years ago a Japanese newspaper got into trouble for saying, in its obituary notice of a learned courtier that one of his regular duties was to "touch up" the poems composed by the late Empress Dowager (Meiji's wife). How much need there is for faith when it is so difficult to be sure of anything!

Again, the Constitution granted in 1889 by the Emperor Meiji is always referred to as though it were a sacred document of unalterable text—though amendments are badly needed and though there is provision in its text for such amendments. The petrification of the State instead of its progressiveness would be ensured by its inclusion in the canon, and there could hardly be a better recommendation.

An ancient and unreadable *Chronicle*, an imperfect Constitution, a couple of Rescripts, and an assortment of jingles, leave us rather scantily furnished with a Sacred Book. It would be well supported, however, by a voluminous literature of loyalty. Mention has been made of the farrago of unedifying anecdotes by which the ineffable doctrines of Zen are supported; and time would doubtless bring us similar pillars of patriotism. For instance, a few years ago, the *Japan Times* published a Toyama Mitsuru number, in honour of the eightieth birthday of that too famous patriot; and it included anecdotes of incredible stupidity written by admirers of the great man; the earnest mind finds a message in such tales.

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

A survey of the sacred literature only exposes the barrenness of the land, yet there is an almost passionate desire to extend the kingdom and worship of the Sun Goddess. In Formosa numerous and splendid shrines are an outward symbol of Japan's dominion. Korea also has State shrines, with a further suggestion, not yet put forward as an obligatory dogma, that Susa-no-o's dominion makes Korea one with Japan from before the beginning of time. Further victories and more shrines can alone preserve the fable which has broken loose on the world.

The war against China is not won, but Japan's eyes are already cast further afield. Japan's militarist régime justifies itself by the preposterous falsehood of the God-Emperor; and the economic effect of the necessity of being invincible is that Japan must go on from victory to victory. She cannot keep still, and even the conquest of the whole of China, if that were possible, would only create a need for further adventures. Siam is in the Japanese pocket already, and greedy eyes are cast on the Philippines, the Dutch Indies, Malaya, and even Australia and India: all these places are permeated by Japanese espionage and intrigue, and their resources are openly discussed as among Japan's economic necessities: the achievement of the economic unit is a Will o' the Wisp that beckons on and on. To the Western European it sounds fantastic, but Japan's megalomania goes further than this.

The question has sometimes been asked whether Japan was "going Fascist." She was much more than Fascist before Fascism was ever dreamt of. So long as Japan remained something quaint and comparatively remote, critics were liable to see only the picturesque side of her performance, and to admire achievements where they should have seen warnings. Dr. Joseph Longford and Professor B. H. Chamberlain both extolled victories that had been attained

not so much by the power of an ideal as by the imposition on the people's minds of the Sun Goddess fraud. The picture of Japan as "one big family" all passionately addicted to dying for the Emperor is an interesting phenomenon on which we look with benevolence so long as it does not menace us. Chamberlain was one of the most judicious and level-headed of men, and he saw more clearly than anyone of his time the workings of the process of forging a mighty weapon of a patriotism founded on fraud; yet, he asked, must we not admire it when this weapon in the hands of Oriental peasants struck down the Russian colossus? Those were the days of Russophobia when even to the most liberal Englishmen a blow struck at Russia seemed worth while from whatever quarter it came. Now that we have to stand aside while China is conquered, while our countrymen are killed, our flag insulted, our trade ruined, and even our Far Eastern fortress and Crown colony openly threatened, it begins to look different. It is a late awakening, but we may as well face the truth when it is staring us in the face.

No lie can endure for ever; but there is no limit to the harm that it may do while it does endure. We have not helped China against Japan, and the alternatives before China bode ill for the world. If the Japanese Cæsar triumphs, China will be an empire of helots; and even if Cæsarism does not conquer, China has little choice but to become militarist herself. The evil will not come to an end with casting out of false gods, any more than it did in Rome. The Buddhist philosophy taught the Japanese to ponder on the impermanence of earthly things. The cult of the Sun Goddess would have it that the Japanese Empire is from everlasting to everlasting—and it thinks it can make it so by crushing dissent in a murderous panic.

It is a dangerous disease from which Japan is suffering—

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

dangerous alike to herself and to others. The cure must come from within—which is not to say that Japan must have her way until she comes to herself. Still less does it mean that we should refrain in any way from frustrating her lest this only unify her in her aggressiveness. That note has been sounded too often. Again and again Japanese professing a liberal outlook have earnestly persuaded the statesmen of other countries that to obstruct Japan would throw the whole nation into the arms of the militarists, whereas if mildness and forbearance are exercised, the liberal forces in Japan will presently get the upper hand and do the right thing. This idea is entirely delusive, but the professed Liberals have a manner so earnest that they have contributed much toward the success of Japan's predacious policies by successfully staving off interference with them.

Where Japan acts aggressively towards her neighbours the only proper policy is to resist her vigorously: to give evil its head only encourages and increases it. It is the change of heart that must come from within—the overthrow of the monstrous lie of imperial divinity which inspires her evil and unlimited ambitions. There are those who have sufficient human dignity to reject this debasing lie; and though they suffer obloquy and martyrdom they will win in the end. It is impossible to believe that man has toiled and agonised after truth through the centuries only to sink into the degradation of a primitive paganism at the last; but that is the ideal that Japan now sets before the world.

INDEX

- Aesthetic sense Japan's greatest gift, 33
 Ainu in Japan, 14, 54
 Anesaki, Dr., 24, 30
 Anthropology, Japanese field, 61
 Apotheosis of impotence, 103
 Armstrong, 104, 105
 Aston, W. G., 120, 161

 Benneville, de, cited, 53, 55, 60, 76
 Brown, J. Macmillan, cited, 61
 Buddhism—
 Imperial Court impoverished by, 91
 Introduced from Korea, 24
 modern developments, 113
 most patriotic when least intellectual, 92
 Buddhist philosophy not understood in Japan, 32
 Burial of living retainers, 20, 21
 Buxton, Dudley, 16, 17

 Cæsarism in Japan, 197, 220–222
 Chamberlain, Prof. B. H., cited, 21, 32, 127, 160
 China, early cultural gifts from, 20, 22
 China's conquest Japan's historic destiny, 209
 Chinese origins of Japanese religion, 194
 Chinese records and Japan, 16–21
 Clay images substituted for living victims at royal funerals, 21
 Confucianism in Japan, 104

 Decorations, rule of, 118
 Deification of Japan's Imperial House, 25; claimed in ancient proclamation, 28
 Diplomatic relations with China, 30
 "Dual organisation," 91

 Eclecticism, Japanese genius for, 23, 106, 175
 Eliot, Sir Charles, cited, 23, 24, 31, 34, 112, 114
 Emotionalism in Japan, 17–18
 Emperors deposed, exiled and murdered, 99, etc.
 must be praised always, 179
 uselessness of, 117

 Emperor, Government makes war on, 99
 Empresses-Dowager, influence of, 28
 Enmity of scholars towards China, 122, 176
 Euhemerism, 23

 Fictions, greatest of all legal, 102
 Foreign origin of noble houses, 29
 Foreign propagandists of Japan, 169
 Frazer, Sir J., 61

 God as an "organ of the State," 171
 God, primitive idea of, in Japan, 33, 34
 God synonymous with Emperor, 130, 131; inferior to Emperor, 199, 200

Harakiri, 67 et seq.
 etiquette of, 70, 79–82
 Headhunting, Japan its home, 63–87
 modern survivals, 84–86
 Heads, "offering" of, 72, 74, 82, 83
 Hearn, Lafcadio, 80
 Holtom, Rev. D. C., 128, 136, 142

 Idzumo, place of importation of Korean civilisation, 21
 myths, importance of, 46
 Shrine, 146
 Susa-no-o arrives in, 48
 Ieyasu, cruelty and treachery of, 78
 Inoue, Dr. T., persecution of, 141
 on eclecticism in Japan, 175
 Integrity, intellectual, fatal to patriotism, 153–157
 Isolation preferred but conquest a preliminary necessity, 207

 Jimmu Tenno, 54, 147
 Jingo, Empress, 55

 Kaempfer on the Emperors, 119, 145
 Kagawa, Toyohiko, quoted, 191
 Kato Genchi cited, 45, 135, 136
Kojiki, 43 et seq.
 Korea, art of iron-working imported from, 49
 Korean Buddhist mission to Japan, 24
 Korean civilisation, 21

THE RISE OF A PAGAN STATE

Legends, amalgam of, 57
Longford cited, 68, 76, 101, 217

Malayan ideas, 23
Malayan strain in Japan, 14, 17
Marriage, primitive, 58-59
Martyrs and fanatics, 110, 111
Marxophobia, 201-205
Meiji, Emperor, 22, 146, 147
Military ascendancy, ancient and modern, 25
Military caste rises to power, 96
Minobe, Dr., persecution of, 171
Monotheism, feebleness of, 45, 46
Morality, germs of, 38, 39
Morphia the instrument of *Bushido*, 174
Morse, *Japanese Homes*, 17
Munro, Dr. N. G., 14
Murder, patriotic, admiration of, 144, 162, 163
Murdoch, James, cited, 177
Mythology watered down for conscripts and schoolboys, 139

Nakajima, persecution of, 177
Navy less arrogant than army, 167
Nihongi, 38
Nogi's junshi, 22

Ordeal by boiling water, 35
Origins, Japanese, 14, 17, 23
Orthodoxy needs a canon, 211

Pacifism prohibited, 197
Patriotic societies, 159
Perry, Commodore, 132
Pimiku, Queen, 20
Political prestige acquired by successful religions, 196
Polynesian myths, 23
Portrait, Imperial, 139
Prisoners of war killed, 67, 77

Rebellions in Japan, recent, 160-162
Redesdale cited, 79, 83
Regalia lost and replaced, 97
 compulsory belief in, 141
 symbolism of, 109
Rescripts, Imperial, 129, 137
 falsification of history, 139
 to the Army, 213
Ryerson, Rev. E., 134

Sadler, Prof. A. L., 22, 78, 112
Salvation Army, 199
Samson, Sir G., 18, 29, 62

Self-decapitation, 67, 69
Shanghai, war at, in 1932, 168
Shinto Canon, 211-222
Shinto, lacking in moral ideas, 59, 120
Shinto, Religious and State, 129
Shinto Revival, 119, 122; consummated, 126
Shinto Sects—
 God of Onden, 193
 Hito-no-Michi, 192
 Konkyoko, 187
 Kurozumi, 183
 Mitakekyo, 188
 Omotokyo suppressed, 181, 184-185
 Phallic worship, 192
 Taishakyo, 188
 Tenrikyo, 181
Shogunate, Tokugawa, break-up of, 124
Shotoku, great scholar, 29-30
Shrine, Ise, scene of political murder, 144
 visited as prelude to murder, 165
Shrines, Japanese, overseas, 50, 153
 refurbished and visiting enforced, 145
Soga family, 25-28, 36, 37
Su Fu a Culture Hero, 19, 20, 53
Sun Goddess, 47, 51, 121, 141, 145, 187
Sword, sacred, 49, 51

Takekoshi Yosaburo, 31, 55
Tea Ceremony, 112, 117
Thinking, effects of a distaste for, 107
Tokonami, why his patriotic plans failed, 155-158
Toyama, the fine flower of patriotism, 158
Treasures, see Regalia
Treaty relations begun, 13

Usurpation, attempts at, 37, 92-93

Vatican brought to heel, 149, 200
 and Sun Goddess exchange envoys, 196
Virtues, Seven Cardinal, 106

Waley, Arthur, 94
War, God of, 56, 72, 73, 105
Weale, Putnam, 15

Yamato, first palace in, 54

Zen, the ineffable, 111



RARE BOOK
NOT TO BE ISSUED

Acc. No.	13336
Class.	A-41
Box	?